

**RAILROAD DEVELOPMENT IN NEBRASKA  
1862–1980  
A HISTORIC CONTEXT**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORIC CONTEXT .....	1
Via Nebraska.....	1
Railroad Development in Nebraska .....	2
Working on the Railroads .....	5
Surveys .....	6
Roadbed Construction .....	6
Track Construction .....	8
Recommended Reading.....	10
Recommended Train Watching.....	12
CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND TO RAILROADS IN NEBRASKA (1846–1862).....	13
Location.....	13
A Good Place for a Railroad .....	14
A Mormon Crossing on the Missouri.....	16
Timing is Everything.....	18
Nebraska Territory .....	21
Founding of Omaha.....	23
Dodge Invests in the Platte Route .....	23
The Civil War and the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 .....	25
Homestead Act of 1862.....	27
CHAPTER III: BUILDING THE FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD (1863–1872) 29	
Convincing the Government .....	29
Changing the Grade.....	31
Statehood.....	33
Missouri River Bridge Options .....	33
Discovering Sherman Pass .....	34
Hell on Wheels .....	35
After the Golden Spike.....	37
Other Chicago, Iowa, and Kansas Railroads Enter Nebraska .....	38
CHAPTER IV: PERMANENT TOWNS (1866–1905).....	43
Railroads and Town Establishment.....	43
The Arms-Length Relationships .....	46
Development of Townsites.....	49
Settlement Along the Railroad .....	50
Land Developers, Speculators, and George Francis Train.....	51
Strategies of Settlement.....	53
Organization of Railroad Towns .....	55
Town Profiles .....	57
Sidney – Parallel Layout.....	57
Juniata – Perpendicular Layout .....	58
Long Pine – “T-town” Layout .....	59
Other Benefits of Town Building.....	60

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER V: RAILROADS CRISSCROSS AGRICULTURAL NEBRASKA (1874–1897) ..	62
Exit Tom Durant, Enter Jay Gould.....	62
The Granger Movement .....	63
The Eighties: Good Years in Nebraska .....	65
Regulation; Another Bust; Another Recovery .....	72
CHAPTER VI: HARRIMAN ERA THROUGH WORLD WAR I AND THE UNITED STATES	
RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION (1897–1920).....	76
Enter Edward Henry (E.H.) Harriman .....	76
Other 1900–1910s Nebraska Railroad Extensions.....	80
Further Regulation, World War I, and the USRA.....	82
CHAPTER VII: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II (1920–1945) .....	86
Good Roads to Post-World War I Prosperity .....	86
Agricultural Depression .....	88
New Omaha Union Station .....	88
Financial Depression .....	90
Streamliners and Advanced Locomotives.....	91
Defending the Home Front in World War II.....	93
CHAPTER VIII: POST-WAR TECHNOLOGY AND LABOR CHANGES (1946–1979).....	98
Post-World War II Struggles for the Railroads .....	98
Diesel Locomotives and Piggyback Intermodal.....	99
Survival of the Fittest in the 1960s.....	101
A Changing Nebraska Landscape .....	103
Reasons to Celebrate .....	105
A Changing Nebraska Railroad Map .....	106
Trans-Nebraska Coal Trains.....	107
CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION: STAGGERS ACT, MODERN MERGER ERA, DOUBLE	
STACKS, AND COAL TRAINS (1980–2014).....	110
Deregulation, Increased Merging, and Accelerating to 70 Mph .....	110
Into the Next Century .....	114
CHAPTER X: PROFILES OF RAILROAD COMPANIES IN NEBRASKA (1862–1980).....	116
“Class I” Railroads Operating Trans-Nebraska Lines.....	117
Union Pacific / UP .....	117
Chicago, Burlington & Quincy / CB&Q, Burlington Route .....	122
Chicago & North Western / C&NW, CNW, North Western.....	126
“Class I” Railroads with Medium Route-Miles in Nebraska .....	130
Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific / CRI&P, Rock Island .....	130
Missouri Pacific / MP, MoPac, MoP .....	134
“Class I” Railroad with Minor Route-Miles in Nebraska .....	137
Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe / AT&SF, Santa Fe.....	137
“Class I” Railroads with Only Omaha-Bridge Service in Nebraska .....	138
Chicago Great Western / CGW .....	138
Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific / CMStP&P, Milwaukee Road.....	139
Illinois Central / IC .....	140
Wabash .....	141

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Operating (in 2014) Shortlines Including Former Interurbans.....	142
Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad .....	142
Frontier Cooperative Company .....	143
Nebkota Railway .....	143
Nebraska Central Railroad.....	144
Nebraska Northeastern Railway .....	144
Nebraska, Kansas & Colorado Railroad.....	145
Omaha, Beatrice & Lincoln Railway .....	145
Sidney & Lowe Railroad .....	146
Union Stock Yards Company of Omaha / South Omaha Terminal Railway / Brandon Railroad 1978–Present.....	146
Abandoned Shortlines Including Former Interurbans.....	147
Lincoln Traction Company.....	147
Nebraska Traction & Power Company.....	147
Omaha & Southern Interurban Railway Company.....	148
Omaha Belt Line Railroad .....	148
REFERENCES .....	149



## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORIC CONTEXT**

### **VIA NEBRASKA**

The landscape that is now the State of Nebraska has carried westward travelers and eastward traders along its Platte River Valleys for centuries. Those traveling the longest distances floated or trudged up the Missouri River Valley to Nebraska from more populated areas to the south and east. They then followed the Platte River west to cross the Great Plains toward the Rocky Mountains. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a few of the bravest and best equipped travelers continued west to the Great Salt Lake and still farther to Pacific Ocean shores. A much smaller number of traders and retreaters completed the reverse journey. But enough invigorated pioneers returned to describe the route and its resources to other westward-inclined individuals and groups, who then joined the parade across the North American continent via Nebraska.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the United States government entertained proposals to link the majority of its population east of the Missouri River with the beaconing West via the relatively new technology of the railroad. Perfected with metal rails and linked with steam propulsion in England, and quickly popular in the Eastern U.S. by the 1830s, railroads with affordable components and great carrying capacity solved many problems encountered with wagon roads and water canals for connecting great distances. Railroads offered ideal transportation when proper grades could be found going in the desired direction, thus river valleys attracted many if not most railroads. Railroads overtook turnpike and canal proposals after the world's industrial capacity produced sufficient cast iron, then rolled iron, then steel rails, and when capital could be assembled to finance the necessary scale of materials and labor. Locomotives and bridges and tunnels could be built one at a time with additional materials and labor. But tens then hundreds and soon thousands of advancing miles of rails, linked in precise parallel ribbons as railroad track, consumed the greatest industrial capacity and labor forces. From the 1830s through the 1850s, rail corridors pushed farther and farther along the Eastern seaboard and westward beyond the Appalachians and to the Mississippi River.

By the time surveyors, Congress, and President Abraham Lincoln decided in 1862 on the timing and route for the First Transcontinental Railroad, the essential elements had fallen into place. Nebraska offered construction-materials access from the Missouri River and an excellent starting grade west along the Platte River. Eastern factories provided incredible industrial capacity recently developed to wage the Civil War. And Congress hit upon creative financing by leveraging the vast public lands of the West, particularly along the proposed Transcontinental Railroad's route. Further, construction on the Union Pacific Railroad began in 1865 at Omaha just 2 years after the standard U.S. track gauge had been settled at 4 feet 8½ inches, and 3 years after the Homestead Act triggered substantial settlement of Nebraska itself.

## RAILROAD DEVELOPMENT IN NEBRASKA

This document provides a relatively brief history of Nebraska's railroads in the context of the First Transcontinental line linking the state with the nation, and subsequently the construction of many more interconnecting railroad lines to serve blossoming settlement within the state. In Nebraska the sequence of settlement followed by railroads often reversed: railroad companies—including the Union Pacific along its Transcontinental mainline—most often built into unsettled areas and established communities so that settlement, and profits, would follow. During the frenzy of settlement and railroad extensions throughout the 1880s, the next pattern developed of throwing down additional rail lines to connect established communities along entirely new corridors. The results provided many Nebraskans competition for lowering shipping and traveling costs, and established longer routes that immediately or eventually attracted logical through-traffic. This rampant capitalism also created unneeded multiple redundancies in lines that strained their companies to maintain, and helped lead the nation and world into the financial collapse and depression of the 1890s.

“In the nineteenth century,” wrote Union Pacific biographer Maury Klein (1989:xiii), America's railroads “were the pioneers in big business, the conquerors [sic] of the West, the network of steel that held an expanding industrial system together.” Indeed, railroads laid the vast majority of Nebraska's tracks in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the majority of that in the 1880s.

They were at the forefront of everything from finance to technology, and a man could have no prouder job than one with the railroad.... The nineteenth century was the golden age for American railroads. It has the most stirring sagas, the cleanest story lines, the happiest endings, and the most colorful characters. Life got more complicated after 1900 for everyone, including the railroads. (Klein 1989:xiii)

In the chronological chapters following, particularly those telling the saga of laying rails and founding communities across Nebraska in the 1870s and 1880s, the inter-relationship between certain railroad companies with certain townsite companies appears obvious. But for many reasons including methods of financing, fear of regulation, and protection for one entity against failure of another, the relationships between new rails and new towns functioned through careful legal separation. For the same reasons, a peculiarity of railroad companies themselves to extend lines using affiliates and subsidiaries, all assigned names similar to or completely different from the parent, causes endless confusion for today's research and no doubt the practice perplexed business and government dealings during their heyday.

Railroad company names on first appearance in this document appear in **bold face**, for example, the **Burlington & Missouri River Railroad**, or **B&MR**, of 1870, which soon became part of the Chicago-based **Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad**, abbreviated as **CB&Q**. Larger system names, such as the Burlington Route, are most often synonymous with their components such as B&MR and CB&Q, so where appropriate and hopefully less confusing, the corporate

system name or abbreviation is applied. In bulleted paragraphs demonstrating railroad construction episodes, the flag symbol “☐” is used to separate distinct extensions of the same company, or closely related categories such as interurban railroads, at close to the same time. “Flag” is an old term for a railroad’s unique logotype or herald, additionally representing the company history; for example, Union Pacific’s, or UP’s, familiar federal-shield herald in red, white, and blue is also its flag, signifying UP’s accumulated culture behind it. Unique also in Nebraska to UP, its participation in the First Transcontinental Railroad is capitalized in this document, as is UP’s resulting Transcontinental mainline, also known as the Overland Route with western partners, distinguished from its many other secondary mainlines and branchlines.

The colorful herald or flag of each of Nebraska’s five long-mileage and historic Class I railroads appears in Chapter V with an overall system map and details of the companies’ origins, subsidiaries and affiliates, along with services in Nebraska. “Class I” is a term applied by the late Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through 1956 to railroad companies reporting annual revenues of \$1 million or more. The revenue-minimum figure has risen considerably since 1956 and many mergers and liquidations have occurred, so that today (2014) Nebraska hosts only two Class I companies, Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway. A critical category of these remaining Class I companies is their function as “bridge” lines, swiftly forwarding through-freight from outside Nebraska across the state along their mainlines for delivery somewhere beyond Nebraska. The initial role of the First Transcontinental was as a bridge line, and its earliest connections to the Burlington and Chicago & North Western freight-gathering, or “trunk” lines, included “interchange” bridge traffic handed from one carrier to the other at busy junctions such Omaha, Fremont, and Grand Island.

Nebraska railroads following the Union Pacific’s triumph of creating the First Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, in contrast to winning more bridge traffic, primarily sought to stimulate agricultural growth throughout the state. When a relatively new community invited a railroad to intersect with its freshly staked gridiron plat, or when a rail company surveyed a completely new town along its lengthening corridor, the first gesture of linkage came through constructing the town depot. “Depot” is the corporate term for a building that centered and sheltered the railroad’s business and services, represented by the company “agent,” for the surrounding community. The depot’s typical placement and function as the heart of its community was galvanized by the town’s name in large type on a large sign hung on both ends of the building to be seen by travelers approaching from both directions. “Station” is a fundamental surveying and engineering term for a particular place on a linear path; therefore, station generally denotes an accounting of business conducted by the railroad from a particular depot along its service corridor. However, the terms depot and station were and are often interchanged when applied to the venerable building type.

All communities needed a water source, and in the days of steam locomotion, railroads needed a substantial water supply at certain distances to replenish the locomotive’s “tender,” the fuel and

water supply car permanently attached to the engine. In Nebraska's geography of the Great Plains with its frequent subterranean water table, large windmills and elevated water tanks often joined the depot buildings at these intervals, for branchlines as few as 10 miles apart and for mainlines as far apart as 100 miles. Water stops were so much a part of early railroad and railroad-town culture that derisive station terms such as "backwater" and "jerkwater," for the act of jerking the tower's chain to open the tender-filling valve, remain in the American lexicon.

The second order of townsite-founding business, after establishing the depot and necessary water stop, in Nebraska towns seemed to have been construction of a grain elevator. The typical "country" or "local" grain-storage structure might have been built by the townsite company, or by an associated grain-purchasing cartel centered in Omaha or within other regional markets. In the farming culture popularity of the Grange and Farmers Alliance unions from the 1870s through 1890s (see Chapter V), membership cooperatives built their own grain elevators to control prices and cut out middle dealers in crop sales and profits. The local grain elevator served several purposes, including a gathering point for crop production from a calculated area—related to the railroad's depot distances of typically 5 to 10 miles, and thus total farm acreage between townsites—and for holding the crop to ship at an opportune time related to annual price fluctuations.

The "Grange" was the abbreviated name for the farmers-union National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry, which gained popularity after the Civil War for helping member 'grangers' with small problems in crop production and large problems in state capitals. When the U.S. Supreme Court in 1877 upheld a series of "granger laws" regulating railroad activities in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, the granger name stuck and expanded to represent the Great Plains farming culture, soon adding Nebraska to the list of "granger states." Railroads serving primarily those granger states became known as "granger roads," providing extensive service along their "granger branchlines."

One dominant image from the history of Nebraska railroads is the branchline train itself, puffing and bobbling ("hunting" is the railroad term for the locomotive's constant swaying) along a grassy roadbed between pairs of depots and grain elevators. These branchline trains typically ventured out from their home terminals and back in a day, providing essential daily services to their on-line communities through mail, packages, bulk supplies, farm equipment, and sundry other shipments. During the busy weeks of grain-harvest seasons, additional trains as needed passed through the communities dropping off empty grain cars and returning to pick them up when full, depending on requests from grain elevator operators, based on grain-market prices. From the 1870s through the 1980s, a five-man railroad crew operated every train starting with the locomotive (steam- and later diesel-powered) with its engineer, fireman, and head-end brakeman, trailed by a caboose carrying the rear-end brakeman and conductor. In the branchline operation of a "mixed" train pulling freight cars and also a handful of passengers and express packages in the last car, the rear crew members rode in a "combine" car. Together with long,

fast, and frequent mainline trains carrying similar crews and cabooses, the slow-paced branchline trains epitomized the moving parts of all railroads to a majority of Nebraskans for more than a century.

## WORKING ON THE RAILROADS

Railroad engineering, as a branch of the civil engineering profession, matured to a sophisticated level by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States. Training in civil engineering—such as Grenville Dodge’s 1851 degree from Vermont’s Norwich University, claiming the oldest civil engineering course in the United States—and published manuals on practical application of engineering to railroad building, produced consistent experts who standardized the industry. As a result, railroad construction in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries most often followed consistent procedures. Though environmental and area-specific conditions differed across the United States, all railroads had basic survey procedures and constructed elements that took similar forms using accepted practices. U.S. railroads that hastily built major transcontinental lines after the Civil War later and continually improved those lines with new bridges, better roadbeds, and often more favorable alignments, as their profits allowed reinvestment in permanent infrastructure. Railroad civil engineers added to their training and books through experience in exactly how, after severe tests of operation and extreme weather, to build more durable roadbeds and track. When technology brought heavier locomotives and loads, bigger and stronger rails replaced the brittle stock of early construction.



Engraving probably from *Harper's Weekly* magazine, of Union Pacific Railroad construction crossing western Nebraska about 1866.

Source: <http://www.wyomingtalesandtrails.com/waudbuildingup.jpg>

## **Surveys**

The construction of a railroad was universally preceded by a three-part location process of reconnaissance, preliminary, and location surveys. Reconnaissance survey was performed first and consisted of a general examination of the areas that the railroad would pass through. The notation of prominent features and the general topography was recorded with reference to the selection of an appropriate route for the railway. Surveyors were encouraged to select routes that paralleled a watercourse to ensure as uniform a grade as possible (Searles 1882:1).

Reconnaissance surveys were conducted by a small group with instruments to record data consisting of a barometer (for altitude), thermometer, level, compass, and telescope or field glasses. Preliminary survey consisted of a more detailed examination of the route. The purpose of preliminary survey was to obtain details of a finer resolution such as distances and elevations, and to quantify the topography in order to produce maps. While obtaining quantitative data concerning the landscape was necessary, the preliminary survey was usually designed to be completed expeditiously, and absolute precision was not required. Preliminary survey parties were much larger than reconnaissance parties, as were the requirements for equipment, generally more precise instruments such as a transit, rods and chains, and a clinometer for measuring angles of slope and incline (Searles 1882:3, 8–16).

The final route of the railway was established with the location survey. Location involved the setting and staking of the centerline of the route passing over the previously surveyed areas; attention to detail was paramount. The location-survey party was composed much the same as the preliminary survey party, and largely used the same equipment, but it took more time to settle the exact route to be followed by roadbed construction crews (Searles 1882:39).

## **Roadbed Construction**

After the route of the railway centerline was confirmed by stakes, initial preparation for roadbed construction included crews clearing and grubbing the right-of-way of vegetation. Any trees present were removed in addition to brush. Timber obtained from clearing activities was stockpiled to be sold or used in the construction of the railroad (Searles 1882:197).

While the clearing was in progress, the civil engineer would rerun the railway centerline and replace any stakes that had been removed in the vegetation clearing. The engineer would also stake out the limits of necessary earthwork as foundation of the roadbed. The stakes were marked with station numbers (every 100 feet) and figures noting the amount of earth to either remove or fill to achieve the grade. During the rerun of the line the engineer would also make any final alterations to the line that were necessary, as well as locate future drains, culverts, bridge abutments, and trestles (Searles 1882:197, 200, 208–216, 222–223).

All railroads required significant earthmoving to create a roadbed, often on an elevated embankment. The roadbed consisted of four components, the embankment (sub-grade, creating

the consistent platform for tracks), the sub-ballast (providing a reasonably smooth surface to lay track ties), the ballast (to seat and drain the ties in place), and drainage ditches (Crandall 1890:59.5; Solomon 2001:9).

The purposes of the embankment and roadbed were to elevate the track, providing a level and stable surface for the railway that was well drained. Elevating the track always above ground level, no matter how featureless the terrain, was important to prevent saturation of the railroad ties and lateral movement of the track. Roadbeds were commonly constructed between 18 and 20 feet wide for single track mainlines and between 30 and 33 feet wide for double tracks (Rehm 1910:7).

Preparation of a roadbed involved the grading of any surfaces that the track would be installed upon that were not already level. Grading consisted of the reduction of slopes and the infilling of low areas, called cuts and fills, to produce a level surface (Crandall 1890:59.5). The earth obtained from cutting and grading activities (and additional material if necessary) was deposited on top of the initial graded surface, requiring fills to level natural dips in the landscape, to create the subgrade. After the embankment was formed, a crew of graders would go over the subgrade and level the top of the embankment to create a uniform surface to enhance drainage and provide a uniform support of the track (Crandall and Barnes 1913:270).

The purpose of sub-ballast was to seat and level the ties, prevent the growth of vegetation, and provide a well-drained and stable surface for the track. The porous sub-ballast also allowed for moisture to be drawn away from the grade before saturating the subgrade and the ties, conditions that could cause the line to shift and increase danger of derailments (Solomon 2001:18). A 1910 track-standards book documents the use of diverse and highly porous materials such as crushed rock, gravel, clay, furnace slag and cinders, and sand as ballast, all superior to earth in terms of their drainage capabilities (Rehm 1910). Different materials were considered appropriate for use depending on the importance of the section of railroad. Crushed rock and slag were considered best for mainlines, while less-expensive materials were employed as ballast on less important and less traveled secondary main and branchlines (Rehm 1910:30).

Ballast was installed in two stages. A thin layer of sub-ballast was deposited on top of the embankment or heavier sub-ballast to provide a level foundation for the ties. Once the ties had been laid and rails spiked in place, a second more substantial layer of ballast was then placed between and around the ties to hold the track structure in place and to drain it well (Crandall 1890:59.2–59.3). The amount of ballast used was dependent upon the type of material employed; however, generous amounts were common when supplies and funds were available. The well-groomed Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad's mainline was reported in 1910 to have applied between 1,644 and 2,495 cubic yards of broken stone and slag per mile (Rehm 1910:16).

Ditching took place alongside grading activities. Side ditches were excavated parallel to the track route and helped to move water away from the roadbed. In areas with double track

alignments, a central ditch on the roadbed was used with drainage achieved through the use of a subsurface trough placed between two ties to allow water to flow into a side ditch (Crandall 1890:59.5). Lining with tile or concrete was recommended for ditches when possible and affordable (Crandall and Barnes 1913:268; Searles 1882:223).

Once the subgrade was prepared, the civil engineer would again return to the embankment and place the ballast stakes. The stakes were placed at every half station (50 feet) to mark the height of the sub-ballast on top of the embankment (Searles 1882:223). Once the limits of the ballast had been marked and the base of the subgrade had been leveled, a layer of sub-ballast was placed on the top of the embankment (Searles 1882:223). The thickness of the sub-ballast was dependent on the desired slope ratios for drainage and seating the ties on curves, commonly between 1.5:1 and 3:1. Ballast was generally between 8 and 12 inches thick (Rehm 1910:7–29). A grading crew would then level the sub-ballast to ensure a uniform surface for the placement of the track that would keep the rails from kinking (rising up at joints or otherwise shifting out of gauge) after they had been placed (Crandall 1890:59.2–59.3; Searles 1882:223).

Track grading activities in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were often accomplished with the use of manual labor employing picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows in addition to plows and mechanical earthmoving equipment such as scrapers (including horse-drawn Fresno scrapers), and large steam-powered excavators affixed to rail cars (Crandall 1890:12–19). Earthmoving consisted of loosening, removing, and the transporting the earth and ballast to its intended destination where the embankment was being constructed ahead of track laying crews (Crandall 1890:12–18, 59.2). Transport of earth and ballast commonly utilized railcars in areas of level track in place, where a locomotive could operate (Crandall 1890:17).

## **Track Construction**

The track laying crews followed the roadbed grading crews. Ties were transported to the front of the line by a variety of means and distributed ahead of the placement of steel rails along the top of the completed grade. The types of wood used for ties were of varying species and quality. Certain woods were more appropriate for use as ties as they could be used without preservative treatment during swift initial construction. Desirable woods included white oak, redwood, walnut, and black cherry. Other woods such as pine, beech, maple, gum, and cottonwood were not recommended for use unless they were treated with preservatives (Rehm 1910:36). Standards in 1910 recommended that ties be cut to 8 feet in length and squared with the face of each end measuring between 6 × 8 inches and 7 × 10 inches (Rehm 1910:37).

Rail size, shape, and weight standards in the United States in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were highly variable. Head width of the widely used ‘T’ rail—first of rolled iron then by the 1870s typically rolled steel—varied between 1 and 2 inches, while the height of the rails could be between 3 and 7 inches. Rail-base dimensions were even more variable, though wider bases were typically used for taller rails (Watkins 1891).



Standards that covered the weight and types of metal used were just as hotly debated. Rail sections weighing as little as 40 pounds per yard were in production by the Bethlehem Steel Company in 1875 following completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad (Watkins 1891:686). In 1908, the American Railway Association (ARA) recommended three types of rail weighing 80, 90, and 100 pounds per yard respectively. By 1910, only some track had been recently laid using the recommended rails and the association reserved final judgment on the adoption of firm standards in order to evaluate their performance (Rehm 1910:38). Standards under consideration in 1910 were concerned with manufacturing consistency that would produce steel rails with a metal composition least likely to be affected by temperature fluctuation (Rehm 1910:39–44). The 1910s ARA standards occupied the high end of the range of existing rails, from 75 pounds/yard to the heaviest at 155 pounds/yard, for typical branchline and mainline uses respectively.

During track-laying, rails were collected and transported to the front of the line for installation. Rails were placed on top of the already in-place ties by one group, followed by another group of workers responsible for spiking the rails to the ties and attaching the fish plates to bolt the ends of the rails together (Crandall 1890:59.3–59.4). After the track was laid, ballast was placed on top of and around the ties, ensuring that the track would not shift laterally (Crandall 1890:59.5). In early years, standards generally advised that the final ballast distribution rise to about 1 to 3 inches from the tops of the ties (Rehm 1910). Later practice tamped the ties securely into the ballast, which was swept from the tops of ties to prevent moisture contact.

An oft-quoted description of early track construction—after all the immense work of roadbed surveying, grading, and tie-laying was done—emerged from an 1869 journalists’ tour of the Union Pacific, arranged and dramatized by UP vice president Thomas Durant. Lowell, Massachusetts, newspaper reporter W.A. Bell wrote, from somewhere along the line, of the labor-intensive “chorus” produced by the Union Pacific crew as it raced west to finish the First Transcontinental Railroad:

On they came. A light car, drawn by a single horse, gallops up to the front with a load of rails. Two men seize the end of a rail and start forward, the rest of the gang taking hold by twos, until it is clear of the car. They come forward at a run. At the word of command the rail is dropped in its place, right side up with care, while the same process goes on at the other side of the car. Less than thirty seconds to a rail for each gang, and so four rails go down to the minute. Quick work, you say, but the fellows on the Union Pacific are tremendously in earnest. The moment the car is empty it is tipped over on the side of the track to let the next loaded car pass it, and then it is tipped back again, and it is a sight to see it go flying back for another load, propelled by a horse at full gallop at the end of sixty or eighty feet of rope, ridden by a young Jehu [referencing a Biblical chariot-driving king], who drives furiously. Close behind the first gang come the gaugers, spikers and bolters, and a lively time they make of it. It is a grand

“Anvil Chorus” that those sturdy sledges are playing across the plains. It is in triple time, three strokes to the spike. There are ten spikes to a rail, four hundred rails to a mile, eighteen hundred miles to San Francisco—twenty-one million times are those sledges to be swung—twenty-one million times are they to come down with their sharp punctuation, before the great work of modern America is complete. (Dodge 1965:38)

## RECOMMENDED READING

This historic context draws from dozens of sources to piece together the chronology of railroad development in Nebraska, beginning with legislation that launched the First Transcontinental Railroad at Omaha, through tremendous changes in the industry at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many secondary sources are available in print and on the Internet to inform this context, and to aid in subsequent research, ranging from local histories, state histories, and histories on Nebraska railroads, to general histories of railroad companies that served Nebraska. Those books and websites used in developing this document are fully cited in the References section. Among the best for overviews of Nebraska’s railroads are those sources listed below.

- *Ghost Railroads of Nebraska – A Pictorial* by Michael M. Bartels and James J. Reisdorff (2002a)
- *Historic Railroads of Nebraska (Images of Rail)* by Bartels and Reisdorff (2002b)
- *Railroads of Omaha and Council Bluffs (Images of Rail)* by William Kratville (2002)
- An intriguing animated map of 1870s rail expansion across Nebraska is available at [http://railroads.unl.edu/views/item/bryan\\_rr\\_chars](http://railroads.unl.edu/views/item/bryan_rr_chars)

The Union Pacific Railroad, commencing in Nebraska and headquartered from the beginning in Omaha, deposited its corporate records with the Nebraska State Historical Society:

- <http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/business/union-pacific.htm>

For community histories, the faithful standard remains Elton Perkey’s *Nebraska Place Names* (1982), and he frequently named the railroad and the specific townsite company responsible for founding many a Nebraska town. But the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, offers more detailed county histories through the Internet, providing more detail on early community histories and associations with their railroads. And the Nebraska State Historical Society has commissioned many community and county histories now available on-line.

- *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names* by Elton A. Perkey (1982, reprinted 1985)
- “Virtual Nebraska”: <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/>
- [nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/timeline/train_george_francis2.htm), for example: “George Francis Train in Kearney,” [http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/timeline/train\\_george\\_francis2.htm](http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/timeline/train_george_francis2.htm)

Other Internet on-line sources are now (in 2014) growing rapidly in number and quality, including many primary-source documents and out-of-print books heretofore available only in central repositories.

- Federal Interstate Commerce Commission records are appearing on the dedicated (and developing) Wikipedia site:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject\\_Trains/ICC\\_valuations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Trains/ICC_valuations)
- *Burlington and Missouri River Railroad. Land Department (Nebraska) Records, 1870-1905.* Nebraska State Historical Society Collection Record:  
<http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/business/BMRR-land.pdf>
- *History of the State of Nebraska, Railroads* by A.T. Andreas (1882):  
[http://www.kancoll.org/books/andreas\\_ne/](http://www.kancoll.org/books/andreas_ne/)
- Illustrated History of Nebraska by Julius Sterling Morton, Albert Watkins, and George L. Miller (1907), “Chapter XXXIII, History of Railroad Construction”:  
<http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ne/topic/resources/OLLibrary/MWHNE/mwhne677.htm>

The very best individual railroad histories are available in H. Roger Grant’s series including two railroads associated with Nebraska. Grant’s work with Charles Bohi on depots is indispensable and includes many Nebraska examples. Maury Klein’s incomparable three-volume series on the Union Pacific is interwoven with the transportation and industrial history of Nebraska in the context with that of the nation.

- *The Corn Belt Route –A history of the Chicago Great Western Railroad Company* by H. Roger Grant (1984)
- *The North Western – A history of the Chicago & North Western Railway System* by H. Roger Grant (1996)
- *The Country Railroad Station in America* by H. Roger Grant and Charles W. Bohi (1978)
- *Union Pacific* by Maury Klein, *Volume I* (1987), *Volume II* (1989), *Volume III* (2011)
- *Burlington Route, a History of the Burlington Lines* by Richard C. Overton (1965)

All the individual historic Class I railroads that served Nebraska have inspired enthusiast groups that use their websites to combine company histories with information on modeling their aspects ranging from locomotives to depots to geography of routes. Examples include the following.

- Union Pacific Historical Society, <http://uphs.org/>
- Burlington Route Historical Society, <http://www.burlingtonroute.com/cbq.html>
- Chicago and North Western Historical Society, <http://www.cnwhs.org/archives.htm>
- Rock Island Technical Society, <http://www.rits.org/RITS/history.html>

- Missouri Pacific Historical Society, <http://www.mopac.org/>

Technical studies are also a fast-growing online research area, with information ranging from the architecture of railroad depots, to the functions and rosters of steam locomotives, to maps and lists of abandoned railroad rights of way (Nebraska is a work in progress for both depots and abandonments).

- <http://www.steamlocomotive.com/lists/searchdb.php?country=USA&state=NE>
- <http://www.depotmaps.com/>
- <http://www.abandonedrails.com/Nebraska>

## **RECOMMENDED TRAIN WATCHING**

Railroads are still a vital part of Nebraska's transportation system, and while thousands of original rail-corridor miles have been abandoned in the past 30 years, a substantial number of historic mainlines and branchlines are still in place and still very active. Some of the best places in the state to observe this industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are listed here.

- North Platte's 8-story-tall Golden Spike Tower overlooking Union Pacific's Bailey Yard, billed as the largest railroad classification complex in the world:  
<http://www.goldenspiketower.com/>
- Old Lincoln Highway across the state: <http://www.lincolnhighwaynebraskabyway.com/>
- Omaha's Art Deco Style gem of a railroad depot, 1931 Union Station, now the Durham Museum on Union Pacific's Transcontinental mainline a short distance from its 1916 Missouri River bridge: <http://www.durhammuseum.org/visit/info.aspx>
- The Nebraska Railroad Museum is based in Fremont and operates vintage equipment on a 17-mile segment of the former C&NW/Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad, as the reconstituted Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad to Hooker. However, in 2014, the museum appears to be dormant: <http://www.fremontrailroad.com/>

## **CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND TO RAILROADS IN NEBRASKA (1846–1862)**

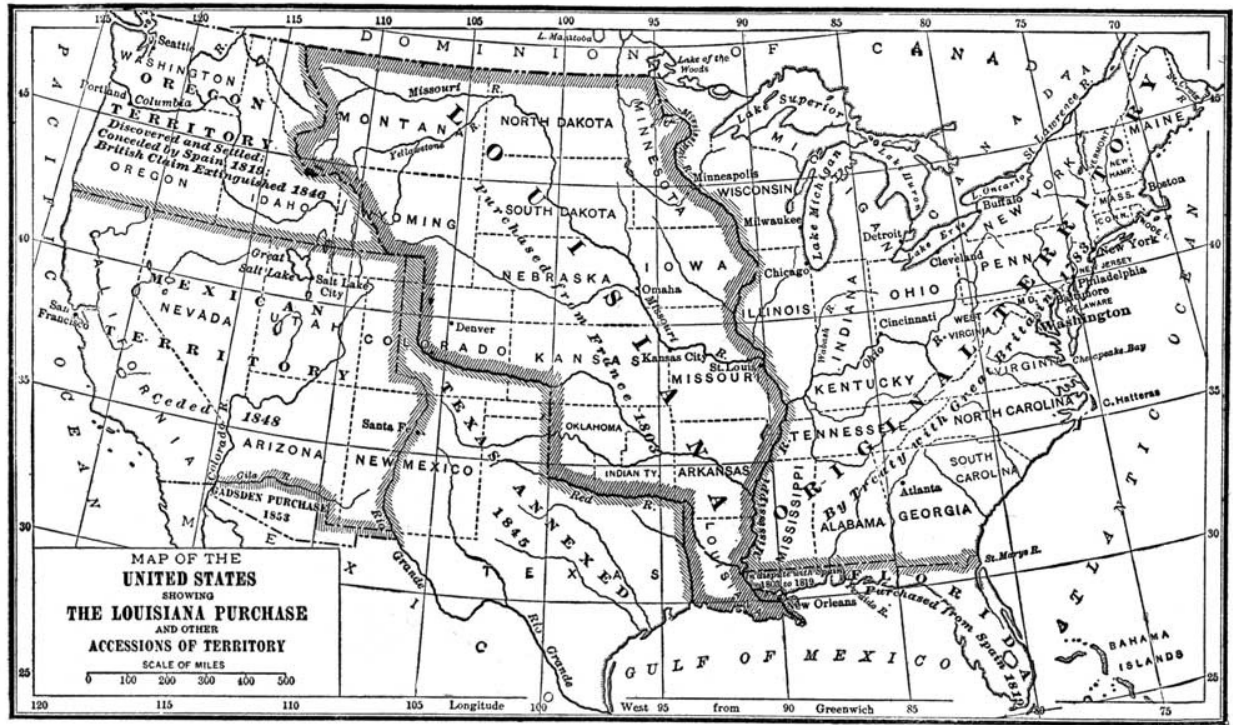
### **LOCATION**

The geography of the State of Nebraska is composed of dissected and undissected plains generally sloping to the southeast. On its eastern boundary, the Missouri River forms the only natural state line with Iowa and Missouri to the east; the other borders are Congressionally drawn with South Dakota on the north, Wyoming on the west, Colorado on the southwest, and Kansas on the south (Federal Writer's Project 2005). Most of the present state lies within the largely treeless Great Plains region between the Rocky Mountains and Central Lowlands. The Missouri River trends southeast and its river valley averages about 70 miles wide on the Nebraska side.

Running the entire length of the state perpendicular to the Missouri River is the Platte River. The Platte Valley is about 10 to 15 miles wide, and is formed—flowing to the east—by the North Platte, the South Platte, and Platte Rivers. Both the North and South Platte Rivers originate in Colorado. The North Platte crosses into Nebraska from Wyoming and trends southeast while the South Platte crosses the western border from Colorado and trends east-northeast. Both rivers meet east of the city of North Platte and become the Platte River, which drains into the Missouri south of Omaha (Federal Writer's Project 2005). Outside of these valleys, Nebraska is covered by rolling hills and table lands, and is dissected by a number of other rivers (Johnsgard 2005).

The United States acquired from France in 1803 a large section of the North American continent known as the Louisiana Purchase, partly including what would become the sprawling territory of Nebraska and then the smaller State of Nebraska. President Thomas Jefferson was originally interested only in purchasing the Mississippi River delta port of New Orleans and the lands around it to more adequately supply the U.S. Western frontier, then only on the east side of the Mississippi. Instead, the United States ended up acquiring a much larger area at a discount, as France and its emperor Napoleon were drained of funds after the Haitian revolution and European conflicts, and could not maintain a presence in the region (Dick 1975:4).

Based on early reports, the land west of the Missouri River in present Nebraska was considered an uninhabited “desert” not fit for cultivation. Based on a perception of little worth, the United States government determined that such a place would provide a convenient location for the establishment of a permanent “Indian Territory” (Shearer 2004:970–971; Olson and Naugle 1997:67), a place where Native Americans removed from the eastern states could be sent. Because of the “desert” designation, most Euro-Americans would at first use Nebraska and its Platte River Valleys only as key segments of many possible overland routes to the Pacific Coast.



Map of United States with outlined 1803 Louisiana Purchase, superimposed with dashed lines of later states, including Nebraska. The Platte and North Platte Rivers run east–west across Nebraska.

Source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/>.

## A GOOD PLACE FOR A RAILROAD

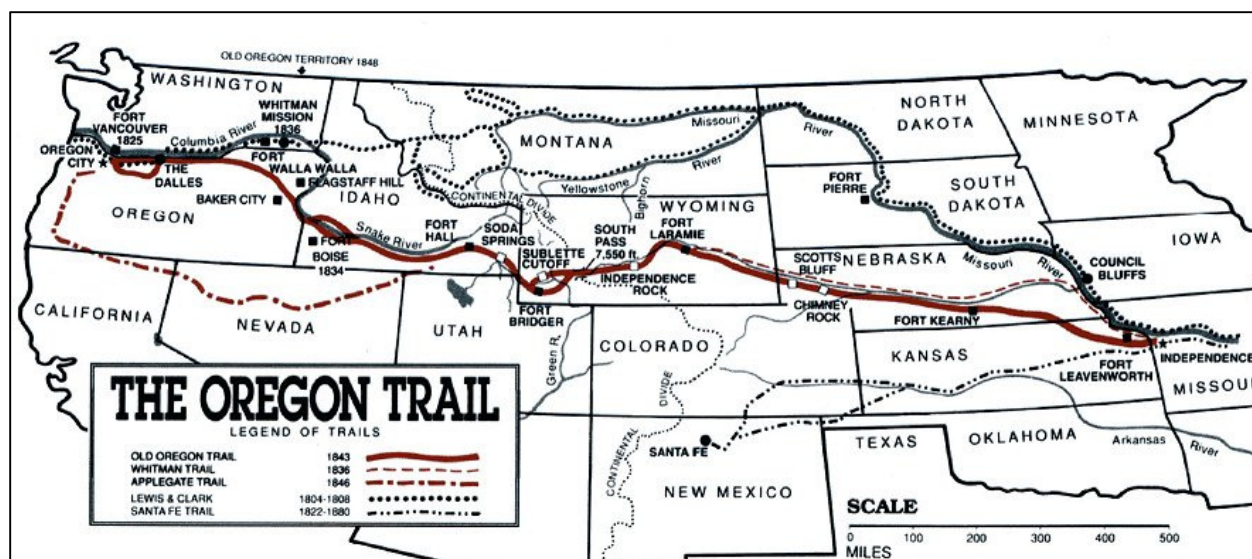
Meandering rivers and difficult overland routes were the primary means of travel on the expanding U.S. frontier west of the Appalachian Mountains (Creigh 1977:47). Most trade in the West flowed north to south along the major shipping lanes such as the Mississippi River (Dreyfus 1995). In the 1830s railroad technology began to alter trade and transportation throughout the populated and urbanizing Eastern and Midwestern United States. By 1832 the East Coast hosted several short-haul railroads totaling 229 miles of track (Klein 1987:7). The first railroad in the fledgling Lake Michigan port of Chicago was the optimistically named **Galena & Chicago Union**, or **G&CU**, projected in 1836 to extend from Chicago some 180 miles west to provide transport for lead mines in Galena, Illinois, near Freeport on the Mississippi River (Murray 2008:12). The G&CU, not connected to any Eastern lines, only built some 36 miles west to Elgin by 1850. Though Chicago had its first local railroad and was much improved by it, a rail connection to cities farther east was yet to come. (Lines combined into the Michigan Southern & Northern Indiana Railroad first connected Chicago east to Great Lakes cities in 1852, eventually becoming part of the New York Central System that dominated the Northeastern U.S. [Drury 1994:206–217].)

Also in the 1830s, the habitable coastal lands of western North America were proved by U.S. protestant and Spanish Catholic missionaries to be a fertile country. Based on a demonstration of

agricultural viability through the limited success in training Native Americans, early missionaries reported back to sponsors and observers that lands in California and Oregon were indeed fit for settlement (Creigh 1977:34; Olson and Naugle 1997:54). Presbyterian missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman traveled in 1836 from New York to Oregon, following the Missouri River to the Platte River, then west along the North Platte. Emboldened by missionary reports, in 1841 the first major U.S. party of about 100 settlers embarked for Oregon from Sapling Grove near present Westport and Kansas City, Missouri, and followed the Blue River and then Missouri River into present Nebraska. Another party of similar size followed in the following year (Durham 1999:74; Olson and Naugle 1997).

In 1842, Col. John C. Frémont became the first to formally survey the Platte and North Platte River Valleys and establish the corridor as one of the best routes from the Missouri River into the West (Frémont and Smucker 1856; Olson and Naugle 1997; Chaffin 2004). Frémont was dispatched by the U.S. government as head of a Corps of Topographical Engineers at the request of his father-in-law, Missouri U.S. Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who wanted to focus attention on Oregon as a settlement destination connected by a reasonable Missouri-based route (Chaffin 2004:98). The purpose of Frémont's survey was to document and publicize the then little-known passage through the Rocky Mountains known as "South Pass" (Chaffin 2004:98). The pass had been discovered in 1812 by a group of fur trappers who avoided a group of hostile Native Americans during their eastward return to St. Louis from Astoria, Oregon. The group made their way through South Pass and then southeast into the Platte Valley and on to St. Louis (Crooks 1856; Wooley 1985). The Platte Valley–South Pass route was adopted by some fur traders, missionaries, and immigrants, though at the time just before Frémont's survey the route was not in wide use (Chaffin 2004:98).

By 1843 "Oregon Fever" was widespread and approximately 1,000 people used the route through the Platte River Valleys that year, followed by another 1,000 in 1844, and 5,000 immigrants in 1845 (Creigh 1977:34; Olson and Naugle 1993:34–39; Zeman 2002:112). Their route over this Oregon Trail began in Independence, Missouri—also the beginning of the Santa Fe Trail, and near the 1841 Oregon embarkation from Sapling Grove—and headed northwest into Kansas along the Blue River into present Gage County, near Beatrice, Nebraska. The emigrants continued to follow the Blue River for another 100 miles before turning west to meet the Platte River near present-day Grand Island, Nebraska. The trail then followed the Platte and South Platte Rivers along their south banks until a point near present Big Springs, Nebraska. Emigrants then crossed to the north bank and followed the North Platte River to Scottsbluff and into Wyoming toward the South Pass (Creigh 1977:36; Olson and Naugle 1993).



Western United States showing route of the 1830s–1860s Oregon Trail. Note dashed red line west from Council Bluffs for the 1836 Whitman Trail of Presbyterian missionaries who followed the Platte River from its confluence with the Missouri River, rather than the Blue River route (solid red) from Independence across northeast Kansas.

Source: <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/graphics/MapOT.jpg>.

These cross-country emigrations on such a large scale soon led to suggestions that a transcontinental railroad would ideally be built along the Oregon Trail. New York merchant Asa Whitney, involved in the China trade and impressed with his travels along the train system in the United Kingdom, submitted a plan to Congress asking for land grants and funding to create such a railroad in 1844 (Bain 1999:9; Klein 1987:7). Congress ignored the idea as Whitney's proposal came at a moment prior to the Mexican War and the California Gold Rush, when a transcontinental railroad was considered by many to be an impractical venture (Andreas 1882).

Meanwhile, the popular and successful emigration of people to the Oregon Territory demonstrated that the Platte River Valley route via South Pass was practical for movement west (Creigh 1977; Dodge 1965; Olson and Naugle 1997). Further, a now more intensive assessment of the country by emigrants and explorers proved that lands along the Platte Rivers were more suitable for settlement than previously thought. However, an obstacle in the way of both settlement and the route of an eventual railroad along the Platte Rivers was the federally designated Indian Territory that precluded both activities (Creigh 1977:46).

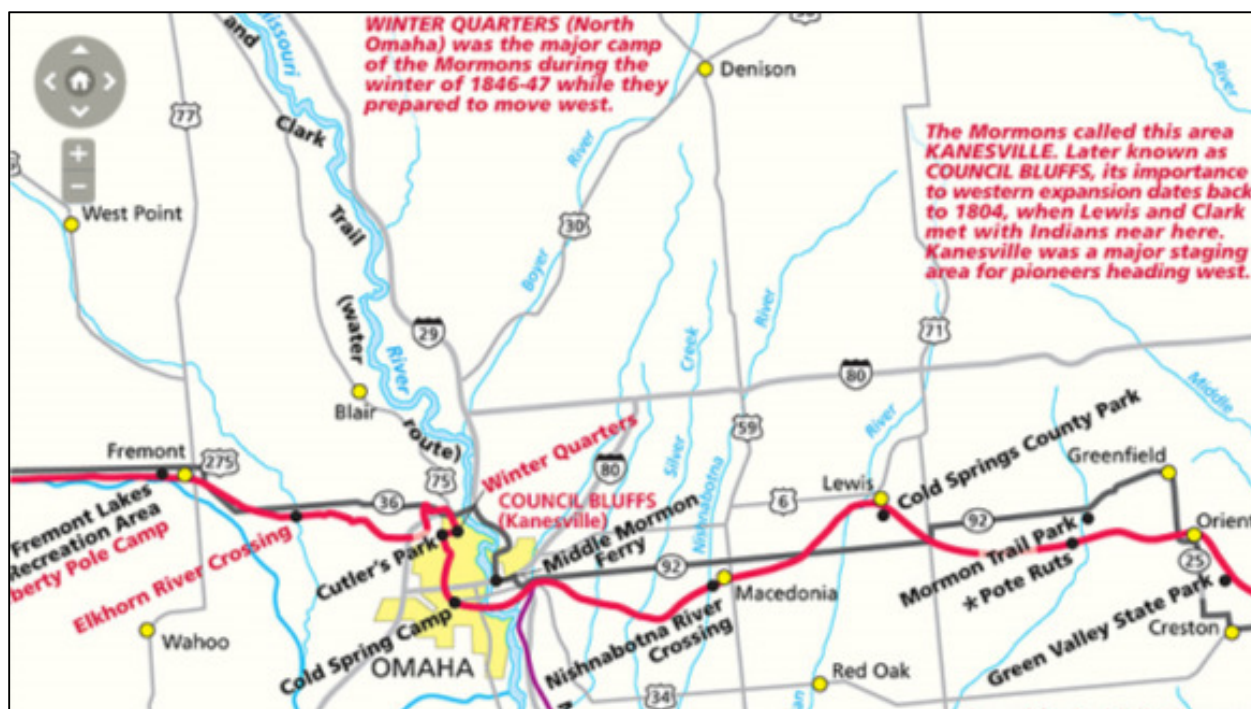
### A MORMON CROSSING ON THE MISSOURI

In 1846, Brigham Young led his Mormon followers from Illinois to a Missouri River landing Mormons named Kaneshville (later renamed Council Bluffs), Iowa. From Kaneshville, they crossed the river into Indian Territory under an agreement with the federal government that allowed the Mormons to winter on the Nebraska (west) side of the Missouri River. The Mormons established the site of Winter Quarters just north of present Omaha, where they spent a



difficult season while Young continued to plan for the expedition west (Creigh 1977:37; Brigham Young University 2014).

In the spring of 1847, Young and 148 followers left Winter Quarters to scout a site for the establishment of a Mormon homeland, after which they would send for the remainder. The expedition arrived in the Great Salt Lake valley on July 24, 1847, just more than 3 months after leaving Winter Quarters and traveling 1,034 miles. The first group was soon followed by 2,000 faithful who were directed by Young to keep to the north bank of the Platte and North Platte Rivers along the route entirely, including South Pass (Olson and Naugle 1997). Thereafter, Mormon emigrants on their way to the Great Salt Lake made their way via Kanesville's crossing to Winter Quarters, and then followed the north side of the Platte. The Mormons kept to the north bank of the North Platte and made their way into present Wyoming beyond Scottsbluff, Nebraska (Olson and Naugle 1997). (Continuous Mormon emigration along the South Pass route continued until the completion of the UP Railroad in 1869.)



Detail of the Mormon migration route west from Illinois across Iowa to their 1846 crossing of the Missouri River at Kanesville (changed in 1852 to Council Bluffs), and continuation to the Platte River near what became Fremont.

Source: National Park Service 2014

In 1844 and 1845 Illinois Congressman and champion of Chicago's railroads and Western expansion, Stephen A. Douglas, had introduced the first bills to organize the Nebraska Territory, both unsuccessful. In 1847 Douglas was elected to the U.S. Senate and became a member of its Committee on Territories where he continued his efforts (Olson and Naugle 1997; Hickey et al. 2007:24). In 1848 upon conclusion of the U.S.-Mexican War, word of gold discovered in the

new U.S. California Territory gave rise to the Gold Rush of 1849 (Creigh 1977; Olson and Naugle 1997). Though a number of overland routes existed to California, the most heavily used was the Platte Valley-South Pass trail that followed the Oregon and Mormon Trails along the north banks of the Platte Rivers. The primary Missouri River starting point for 49ers arriving overland from the East and the Great Lakes became Kanesville (Council Bluffs), Iowa, where Mormons had operated ferry service to cross the Missouri since 1846 (Olson and Naugle 1997).

In 1849 Senator Douglas took part in a railroad convention in St. Louis where a resolution was passed favoring that city as the eastern terminus of a transcontinental railroad. But his committee ultimately selected a route that used the South Pass, more easily reached for Eastern U.S. trade from Chicago via the Missouri River crossing at Kanesville, Iowa, than from river routes landing at St. Louis or Independence (Olson and Naugle 1997:70).

### **TIMING IS EVERYTHING**

Government and public opinions on the practicality of a transcontinental railroad shifted by 1850. The settlement successes in Oregon and California prompted a series of railroad bills introduced between 1850 and 1853. The ensuing California Gold Rush traffic through Kanesville caused its population to swell beyond its former Mormon dominance, and residents changed its name to Council Bluffs in 1852 (Brigham Young University 2014). Meanwhile, all of the 1850s federal railroad bills saw defeat due to political wrangling between northern and southern states that wished for the Pacific route to pass through their sections, and between members of Congress arguing over the nature of the railroad and whether it should be built by private or public entities (Klein 1987).

While Congress argued over a transcontinental project, national railroad expansion grew to include lines connecting to a number of Midwestern cities. Chicago became a hub for the collection and distribution of agricultural, mineral, and lumber commodities produced in the region. Connections with Chicago played a part in the reorientation of trade in the United States from north-south to east-west (Dreyfus 1995). Reorientation caused trade that had previously gone through St. Louis to be directed to Chicago. The city's new rail, port, and water infrastructure also caused it to be well positioned to facilitate westward migration (Dreyfus 1995). As railroads increased in importance for Chicago, their economic power became apparent and they gained powerful government advocates including Illinois' Senator Douglas (Creigh 1997:47). Douglas lent his support to the **Illinois Central Railroad (IC)** in 1850 and with his backing the railroad became the first to receive federal land grants while building north-south through Illinois (Dreyfus 1995). (The IC eventually entered Omaha, Nebraska, via its own Missouri River bridge in 1899 during E.H. Harriman's involvement with both IC and UP; see Chapter VI).

Though the bills that would establish a transcontinental railroad in the 1850s failed in Congress, a compromise 1853 appropriations bill provided \$150,000 for a series of surveys to establish the

most practical route to the Pacific Ocean (Klein 1987). Then-Secretary of War Jefferson Davis dispatched five groups of Army engineers to survey different routes across the country that included a Northern Route between the 47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> parallels, an Overland Route between the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> parallels, the Buffalo Route between the 38<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> parallels, the Memphis connection along the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel, and the Southern route along the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel. Interestingly, the Platte River Valley itself—roughly following the 42<sup>nd</sup> parallel—was not included in the 1853 surveys, ostensibly because it was an already well-known route and further exploration would have been a waste of resources (Albright 1921:157). Upon completion of the surveys, Secretary Davis, partial to his home section, recommended the mild-weather Southern route, which led predictably to further discord in Congress (Klein 1987).



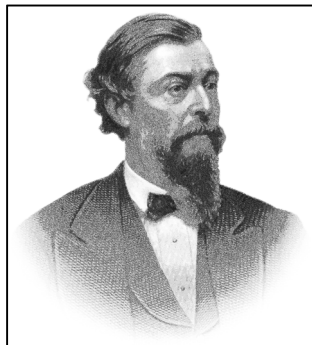
Summary map in 1854 by G.K. Warren for Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, showing the proposed Pacific Railroad routes, north, central, southwest, and south.

Source: Library of Congress

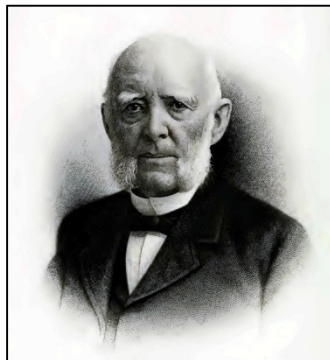
The first successful westward railway to cross Illinois and connect Chicago with the Mississippi River was the **Chicago & Rock Island** in 1854. (The railroad changed its name to “**& Pacific**” in 1866, arrived opposite Omaha, Nebraska, in 1869, and in 1885 built its own line from Omaha through Lincoln toward Denver along the Republican River.) The **CRI&P**, popularly called the **Rock Island**, in 1848 hired surveyor Grenville Mellen Dodge, a young engineer enamored with the idea of a transcontinental railroad, for its expansion plans (Dodge 1965:98). Dodge worked for the Rock Island until 1853 when his boss and already famous engineer Peter Anthony Dey

left that line for the newly formed **Mississippi and Missouri Railroad**. The **M&M** was owned by Henry Farnam, original contractor and now president of the Rock Island, and financier Thomas Clark Durant, both collaborating to complete a route west across Iowa generally toward the Missouri River (Klein 1987).

Dodge impressed Dey as he conducted the M&M survey between Davenport and Iowa City. After reaching Iowa City, the party halted as M&M directors delayed their decision on pushing west. In August 1853, the M&M received word that their rival **Cedar Rapids & Missouri Railroad (CR&M)**, future subsidiary of the **Chicago & North Western; C&NW** operated its own extensive lines in Nebraska after 1882) had altered its route and was now seeking to make a crossing at Kaneshville/Council Bluffs. Dey sent Dodge with a party of 14 men west towards Council Bluffs and the Missouri River, and into Nebraska Territory to survey as much of a Platte Valley route as possible (Perkins 1929:23). Dodge's survey party raced the CR&M and beat them to the Missouri on November 22, 1853 (although the CR&M became the first to construct to Council Bluffs in 1867) (Klein 1987:19).



Thomas Clark Durant, 1820-1885, Vice President of the Union Pacific Railroad.  
Source: engraving by Robert O'Brien based on a photograph by Matthew Brady about 1870.  
Source: Wikipedia Commons.



Peter Anthony Dey, 1825–1911, civil engineer for the M&M and UP Railroads.  
Source: IAGenWeb.org.



Grenville Mellen Dodge, 1831–1916, civil engineer for the M&M and UP Railroads.

Source: Library of Congress

## NEBRASKA TERRITORY

When Dodge crossed the Missouri, Nebraska was still considered Indian Territory. The main barrier to the formation of a Nebraska Territory open to settlement was that of slavery, and whether it should be allowed if the territory was formed. Increasing pressure was brought to bear by supporters of a transcontinental railroad, and by those advocating for the legalization of settlement in Indian Territory beyond the Missouri River. However, Southern states opposed creation of another free state that could alter the balance of power under terms of the 1820 Missouri Compromise. That act extended a slavery line along the 36° 30' parallel into Western territories and henceforth required dual admissions of new states, one north of that line and free and one south of the line allowing slavery. A possible way around the impasse appeared with the Compromise of 1850 that admitted California as a free state and allowed the new territories of Utah and New Mexico to decide on their futures with slavery (Olson 1955:74–81).

On February 2, 1853, Illinois Congressman William A. Richardson introduced a bill to organize the Nebraska Territory, passing the House but failing in the Senate despite the backing of Stephen Douglas, because of the implication that the Missouri Compromise might still apply. A similar territory bill was introduced in December of the same year by Iowa U.S. Senator Augustus C. Dodge that also implied the application of the Missouri Compromise. The December bill was later altered by the Senate Committee on Territories led by Douglas, as the Kansas-Nebraska Act, organizing Kansas Territory as separate from Nebraska Territory, and leaving the question of slavery in both up to eventual passage of constitutions by voters, effectively nullifying the Missouri Compromise. Because the issue of slavery was not pre-determined, the bill gained Democratic support and was approved by Congress and signed into law by President Franklin Pierce on May 30, 1854 (Olson 1955:70–81).

The Kansas-Nebraska Act also moved Indian Territory out of the new Nebraska Territory and into a much smaller boundary close to that of present Oklahoma (Creigh 1977; Olson and Naugle 1997). The act's establishment of the huge Nebraska Territory's boundaries was based largely on the northern and western boundaries of the Rocky Mountains below Canada, the Missouri

River on the east, and the new Kansas Territory on the south. Nebraska Territory in 1854 covered parts of the eventual states of Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado, and Montana (Nebraska State Historical Society [NeSHS] 2014a).

In November 1854, as a precursor to the establishment of a territorial capital, acting territorial Governor Thomas B. Cumming ordered a census that resulted in a count of 2,732 inhabitants within the entire Nebraska Territory (Federal Writer's Project 2005:53). A settlement existed at the Mormon site of Winter Quarters, and some traders camped at the Indian agency at Bellevue south of Omaha. Operators of barge and ferry landings welcomed boats into their camps of St. Stephen, Old Fort Kearny (Nebraska City), Plattsmouth, and Omaha, the latter across from the Mormon outpost of Kaneshville. Squatters moved deeper into Indian Territory in the early 1850s, settling mainly south of the Platte River, and some residing north of the Platte along the banks of the Elkhorn River (Federal Writer's Project 2005:56–57). Despite a low population, town companies and promoters worked quickly and in 1854 the territorial legislature of Nebraska granted 17 town charters that included Omaha, Plattsmouth, Florence, and Bellevue along the Missouri River (Olson and Naugle 1997).

Grenville Dodge himself in 1854 took a leave of absence from the M&M Railroad, settling on a claim he had purchased on the Elkhorn River to homestead with his new wife. The Dodges remained there until 1855 when issues on the frontier with hostile Native Americans forced them back to Council Bluffs (Klein 1987). Meanwhile the M&M completed track between Rock Island and Iowa City in 1855, approximately 200 miles short of Council Bluffs, when progress stalled due to lack of funds (Dodge 1965; Klein 1987).

As Dodge pursued homesteading, the primary motivation for initial expansion within the territory was not the acquisition of agricultural land, but land speculation as many sought a stake in the new West and its anticipated development. Town companies formed to stake out a town site and divide it into lots, then petitioned the Territorial Legislature for incorporation. Once a town had been incorporated, land promoters then set about promoting their townsites, mostly through the use of local newspapers distributed from Iowa east. This land acquisition outpaced completion of surveys.

By September 30, 1857, the federal government had surveyed approximately 2.4 million acres in Nebraska Territory, and some 11,000 people lived there with almost every family holding a claim on surveyed lands or otherwise (Olson and Naugle 1997:88). Most of those that did settle in the new territory continued to distribute themselves south of the Platte River along its banks, and those of the Missouri River, and their tributaries (Federal Writer's Project 2005:55; Olson and Naugle 1997:82).



## **FOUNDING OF OMAHA**

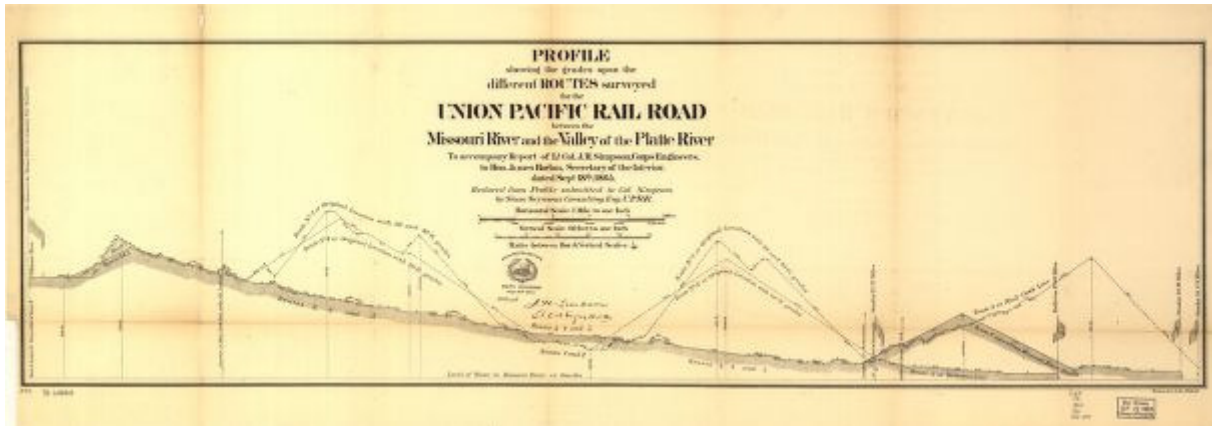
Iowa land speculators played an influential role in the developments that took place on the west side of the Missouri River. Prior to creation of Nebraska Territory, speculators in Council Bluffs (formerly Kanessville), Iowa, led by ferry operator William D. Brown, became interested in establishing a town directly across the Missouri. Brown's townsite claim was managed by the Council Bluffs and Nebraska Ferry Company after 1853, and took the name Omaha for the native tribe that formerly occupied the bluff (Olson 1955:84–85). The new town gained a postmaster in 1854 through the influence of an Iowa congressman who had been an ardent supporter of the territory and a transcontinental railway. Omaha was platted and—with its new territorial charter—by July 1854 had 20 houses in addition to several stores and saloons (Olson and Naugle 1997:79–80).

Iowa interests pushed for Omaha to be named the territorial capital over the larger town of Bellevue on the south side of the Platte River's confluence with the Missouri River. Acting Governor Cumming, who owed his appointment to Iowa backers, blatantly favored the area north of the Platte's confluence, specifically Omaha, despite the majority of the population living south of the Platte (Olson and Naugle 1997:82). Cumming soon named the new town of Omaha as the capital, leading to the territory's first political crisis. The value in designating Omaha lay in the possibility of a future connection by rail to the growing railroad hub of Chicago, which would in turn further encourage the much-discussed transcontinental railroad to cross the Missouri at Council Bluffs and Omaha. Those who stood to benefit from such an arrangement were the business interests in Council Bluffs, as well as in Chicago, and Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas (Creigh 1977:47).

## **DODGE INVESTS IN THE PLATTE ROUTE**

During his time living on the Elkhorn and at Council Bluffs, Dodge continued to research the Platte Valley route for proper railroad right-of-way characteristics (Klein 1987:20). Dodge's devotion to the Platte Valley in comparison to the other routes surveyed in 1853 by the government was due to his beliefs that the Platte offered both low gradients and a fairly linear route (Dodge 1965:61, 143). The route was also one of the shortest to South Pass, the preferred overland option to cross the Rocky Mountains (Wheaton 2011). Dodge's conviction that the transcontinental should travel through Council Bluffs translated into personal action when he heavily invested in land along his proposed route (Klein 1987).

In 1856 Dodge undertook a series of surveys privately funded by Farnam and Durant to inspect all possible Rocky Mountain passes from the Sangre de Christos in present Colorado north to South Pass in present Wyoming (Ambrose 2001; Dodge 1965:47; Klein 1987). The next year Dodge went to New York to present the results of his Rocky Mountain pass surveys to Farnam, Durant, and other directors of the M&M, strongly recommending the Council Bluffs gateway to South Pass.



Surveys of Dodge’s Platte River Route took the form of reports to the Secretary of the Interior, including this 1865 grade profile of the proposed line from the Missouri River (right, east) to “the Valley of the Platte River” (left, west), and apparently comparisons to the mountainous profiles other proposed routes.

Source: Library of Congress

Unfortunately the international financial panic of 1857 left the majority of directors unable to comprehend a solely privately funded railroad extending beyond Iowa, because of the enormous and unavailable capital needed (Klein 1987; Dodge 1965). Farnam and Durant, however, mindful of competing companies’ rail surveys across Iowa ending at Council Bluffs, resolved to raise funds to complete at least the line from Iowa City to Council Bluffs...by stimulating investor interests in the Pacific Railroad (Dodge 1965:9). They directed Dodge to collect supplies delivered by boats on the Missouri River and to begin work on a grade from Council Bluffs east toward Iowa City. As grade work commenced, Dodge moved to Iowa City and began work from there to the west (Dodge 1965:9). The grading was never completed, since the M&M soon entered receivership. Dodge thereafter continued to perform surveys in the Platte Valley at the behest of Farnam (Dodge 1965).

Upon return from another survey in August 1859, Dodge attended a speech in Council Bluffs given by Illinois attorney Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln had traveled to western Iowa to review some parcels of land offered to him as collateral for a possible loan (Dodge 1965). Lincoln was a successful railroad lawyer, a believer in the transcontinental railroad, and a proclaimed Republican candidate for the 1860 U.S. Presidential race. After Lincoln had given his speech, an associate pointed Dodge out to him as a promising railroad engineer (Evans 2010). Lincoln engaged Dodge in conversation and asked for speculation on the best route for the politically popular transcontinental railroad.

Dodge informed Lincoln that in his opinion, the best route would be through the Platte Valley beginning at Council Bluffs; he admitted that a number of Chicago railroads already projected Council Bluffs terminals. Developed by Mormon immigrants and then gold-rush opportunists, Council Bluffs was by 1859 an established economic hub on the Missouri River north of St. Louis and a logical location for the eastern terminus of the transcontinental line. In combination



with an already established economic base, Dodge confirmed, the Iowa town was opposite the beginning of the uniform grade of the Platte Valley all the way to the Rocky Mountains. For railroad companies already established in Iowa with an eye towards connecting with the transcontinental, Dodge told Lincoln, Council Bluffs offered the logical starting point (Ambrose 2001; Klein 1987).

A more immediate benefit of Omaha's recent recognition and Dodge's continuing Platte surveys came with installation of the federally subsidized Western Union Telegraph, entering Nebraska from St. Joseph, Missouri, in August 1860. Contractor W.H. Stebbins extended poles and wires along the Missouri River from Brownville to Omaha in September, then turned west to follow the Platte River west across the state. Stebbins reached Fort Kearny in November, in time for news of Abraham Lincoln's Presidential election to reach the post by telegraph, and by spring 1861 he reached Julesburg, Colorado, on the South Platte River. Western Union's general agent Edward Creighton constructed the line west of Julesburg, reaching Salt Lake City and linking with the California-based segment in October 1861, almost 1 year ahead of schedule (Olson 1955:117).

## **THE CIVIL WAR AND THE PACIFIC RAILROAD ACT OF 1862**

In 1859 both the Republican and Democratic parties declared themselves to be in favor of Nebraska statehood, and called for a convention to frame a state constitution. Under territorial status, Congress approved governor appointments and territorial legislation. Many settlers felt these conditions appeared to violate the principles of popular sovereignty under which the territory was established. Voters in the territory rejected this move towards statehood and the convention did not take place that year (Olson and Naugle 1997:132, 136). Following the failure to achieve statehood was a reduction by Congress in the size of the Nebraska Territory in 1861. Statehood was seen as inevitable, but only for the most densely populated part of the territory. Related to requests from mining interests to form other smaller territories, the Colorado and Dakota Territories were carved by Congress from Nebraska Territory.

The year 1861 also saw the inauguration of President Lincoln and the beginning of the Civil War. After meeting Lincoln in 1859, Dodge had remained in Council Bluffs, but with the outbreak of war he joined the Union Army as an engineering officer. Dodge's experience eventually placed him in charge of military engineering activities that included surveying roads and streams, rebuilding destroyed railroads, building bridges, and constructing entrenchments and forts. The command led by Dodge primarily concerned itself with the rebuilding of damaged railroads and bridges (Dodge 1965:101–103; Klein 1987). Though the war disrupted plans of many private railroad companies concerning a Pacific route, the federal government continued to work towards a transcontinental project. The war made it evident that a railroad was necessary for the preservation of the Union and control over the Western territories (Dodge 1965; Hickey et al. 2007).



U.S. government map of 1857 by G.K. Warren inspiring the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862, showing the 1853–1854 Pacific Railroad Surveys—Northern, Midwestern, and Southern—and the act’s proposed Midwestern route from the Pacific east that split into four branches in eastern Nebraska Territory (see “After the Golden Spike” section below).

Source: Library of Congress

The war also simplified the decision on the transcontinental route as the Southern states’ secessions had removed from Congress advocates for any of the Southern routes (Klein 1987). Not all issues had been resolved, however; the choice among three Northern routes remained as did the debate of private versus public construction of the railway.

In an effort to skirt these major issues, the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 was a hasty wartime compromise. The choice of which route to use was resolved by a decision to build a single line from California east to a point near Fort Kearny, Nebraska, about 180 Platte Valley miles west of Omaha. At Fort Kearny, the single Pacific line would then split into four separate branches generally northeast, east, and southeast. The act also formed the Union Pacific Company, which was to be responsible for the “Iowa Branch” through Omaha and Council Bluffs, while state-chartered railroad companies would be responsible for the other three lines (Klein 1987:14). Thomas Durant, former director of the M&M, soon became the largest stockholder of the resulting **Union Pacific Railroad** and set about marketing shares of the company. Durant also felt confident directing Peter Dey to leave his work on the slowly moving M&M and make his way west to survey different routes to the North Bend of the North Platte. Dey obliged and surveyed Bridger and Cheyenne passes in present Wyoming (Klein 1987).

## HOMESTEAD ACT OF 1862

Meanwhile, settlement in Nebraska Territory continued unabated. A year prior to the beginning of the Civil War the population had increased to 28,841 as settlers moved into the territory (Olson and Naugle 1997). Unlike the early territorial days dominated by land deals, settlers who came to Nebraska were interested in pursuing agriculture rather than land speculation. Congress and Lincoln also saw the benefit in expansion farther west and on May 20, 1862, passed and signed the Homestead Act in large part to secure the West for the Union (National Park Service 2014a). They also enacted the Morrill Act of 1862, establishing agricultural colleges in the states and allowing Western states with public lands to fund their institutions with income from those lands (Olson 1955:169). This federal education gesture ultimately linked settlement, transportation, and agricultural improvement programs. The Homestead Act was intended to reduce speculation and ensure that farmland was improved and made productive (Creigh 1977:60). The act provided a family 160 acres of free land that had to be improved within 5 years. If the homesteader succeeded in fulfilling his obligations, the patent was awarded at the end of the 5-year “proving” period (National Park Service 2014a).



The Homestead Act attracted an incredible 100,000 new settlers in Nebraska between 1862 and 1865. The typical “claim shanty” is depicted on this centennial image for the 1862 act as a “soddy,” a first house of available materials. Nebraska hosted many of its new citizens in such housing.

Source: U.S. Post Office Department 1962

The first homesteader under the 1862 act was Daniel Freeman, who filed his claim near the Oregon Trail outside current Beatrice, Nebraska, on January 1, 1863 (now the site of the Homestead National Monument of America) (National Park Service 2014a). During the first year of the Homestead Act, “entrymen” made 349 applications for 50,000 acres of land in Nebraska Territory, most south of the Platte River. Many homestead entries were never completed, and loopholes remained through which land speculators and the Union Pacific

Railroad could acquire property and sell at a profit to homesteaders desiring better lands than what was freely available, or looking to expand on adjacent claims. Nonetheless, the act had the effect of bringing more than 100,000 homesteaders into the territory by the end of the war (Creigh 1977:101–102; Federal Writer’s Project 2005:58, 96).

Distribution of federal lands was also integral to the Pacific Railroad Act. The Union Pacific was provided at least a 200-foot right-of-way and adjacent lands in a 10-mile strip of alternating sections on each side of the track, totaling a width of 20 miles, through federal land grants. The U.S. government also provided bond subsidies to be issued for each 40 miles of track certified by government inspectors based on the types of terrain over which the track passed. The subsidies were actually loans that the railway was required eventually to repay, and the limit on the bonds was set at \$50,000,000 (Klein 1987).

## **CHAPTER III: BUILDING THE FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD (1863–1872)**

### **CONVINCING THE GOVERNMENT**

Though the Union Pacific Company incorporated formally in October 1863 with Durant as vice president (Klein 1987), the paper railroad found it difficult to secure capital investments under the terms of the 1862 act. Led by Durant and assisted by Dodge, the company lobbied Congress and President Lincoln for a new railroad act more attractive to subscribers. Dodge's conviction concerning the Platte Valley across Nebraska, in addition to his involvement with a powerful delegation of Iowa interests connected to the Rock Island Railroad that helped elect Lincoln (Ambrose 2001:39), evidently made an impression on the President. Lincoln called Dodge to the White House from military duties to meet with him in June 1863. In the meeting, Dodge reiterated his belief in the Platte Valley route and the eastern terminus at Council Bluffs, and made the President aware of deficiencies in the 1862 act that prevented the Union Pacific from attracting subscribers (Klein 1987:24). Dodge successfully convinced the President, and on November 17, 1863, Lincoln signed an executive order placing the terminus at the border between Iowa and the Nebraska Territory near Council Bluffs. Durant immediately chose to interpret the designation as Omaha, where he no doubt owned speculative property (Klein 1987).

After the executive order placing the eastern terminus, Dey paused briefly in his line surveys to find a site for the first bridge over the Missouri River. Dey chose a bluff just south of Omaha's plateau where he favored a high bridge—to clear Missouri riverboat traffic—that would connect via a high fill on the Iowa side with Council Bluffs (Dodge 1965; Klein 1987). Though many at the time doubted that the presumed sandy bottom of the river could support a bridge at all, and though the technology for such a long and high bridge did not yet exist in the United States, Dey did anticipate the eventual location and type of bridge—iron caissons sunk to bedrock—that would eventually be used for the road to cross the wide Missouri (Klein 1987).

The year 1863 also saw further reduction in the size of the Nebraska Territory. Idaho Territory was created on March 4, 1863, and its boundaries served to move the western boundary of the Nebraska Territory much farther east beyond the Rocky Mountains. The establishment of that new territory in 1863 in combination with those formed in 1861 created the approximate boundaries of the current State of Nebraska (Federal Writer's Project 2005:55; Olson and Naugle 1997).

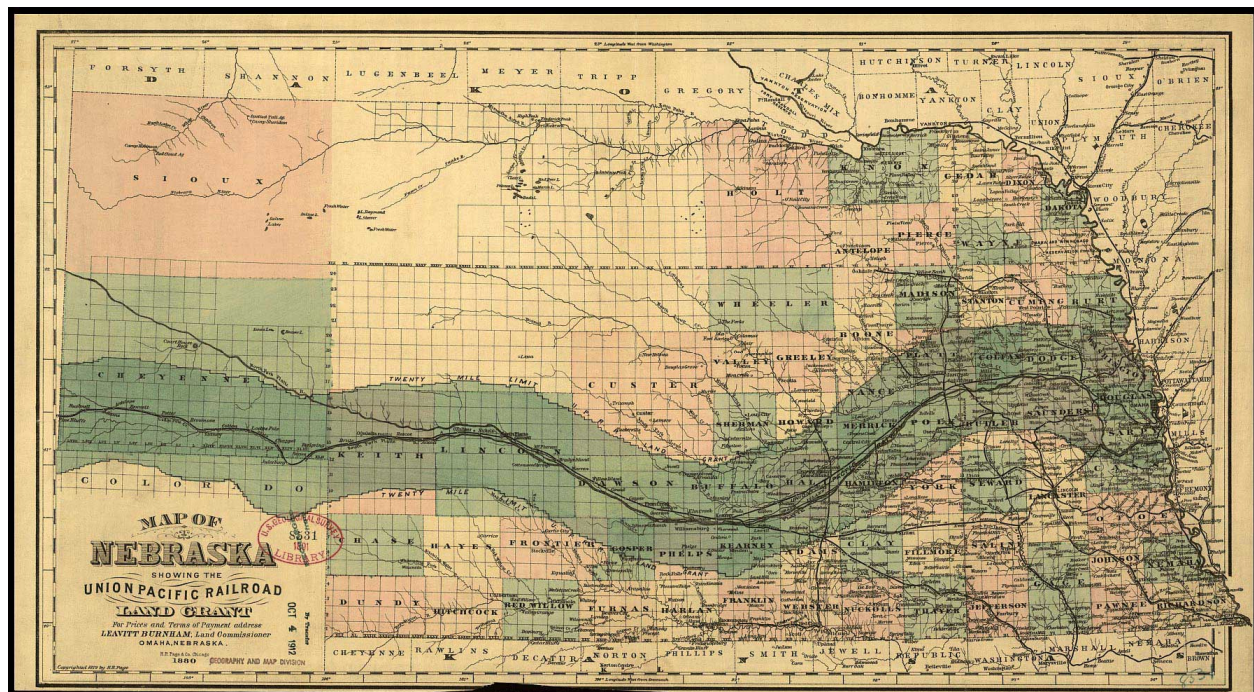
Washington lobbying efforts on the part of Durant and Dodge in 1863 also succeeded with the passage of the 1864 Pacific Railroad Act signed by Lincoln on July 3, 1864. The act doubled the size of the land grants, gave the railroad mineral rights on granted land, issued government bonds every 20 miles instead of every 40, and allowed the railroad to sell its own bonds among other provisions (Klein 1987). The new act made the project much more attractive to investors despite the continuing war. In response to the Act, Durant and his collaborator Thomas Francis Train



(see Chapter IV), recently returned from a tour of successful French railroad and real estate ventures, formed the Credit Mobilier of America to build the road through secretive transfers of construction money favoring Durant and the UP directors (Encyclopedia Britannica 2014).

Though the railroad act of 1864 improved financial prospects for the company, the issue of the exact route beyond the Platte Valley and over the Rocky Mountains had not yet been determined. Physical issues included whether the line should follow the Oregon Trail along the North Platte and cross the mountains through the well-traveled South Pass to the Green River, or follow the South Platte to either Lodgepole Creek or the Cache La Poudre branches to reach the Laramie Mountains and cross the Wyoming Basin to the Green River (Klein 1987:51). Later in 1864, Dey convinced Durant to outfit four surveying parties to resolve the route (Klein 1987).

The South Platte alternative of the 1864 surveys in Nebraska Territory fell under direction of Ogden Edwards who was responsible for surveying the Platte and Republican Valleys in the central and western parts of present Nebraska. The Republican River route, diverging southwest from the Platte near Fort Kearny, would take the Union Pacific directly west-southwest to Denver, if the directors chose that alternate for the transcontinental (they did not, but the Burlington Route as the Burlington & Missouri River [B&MR] Railroad did in 1882). Edwards' 1864 surveys, however, were not completed due to hostile Native Americans who camped between the Platte and Republican Rivers (Klein 1987:57).



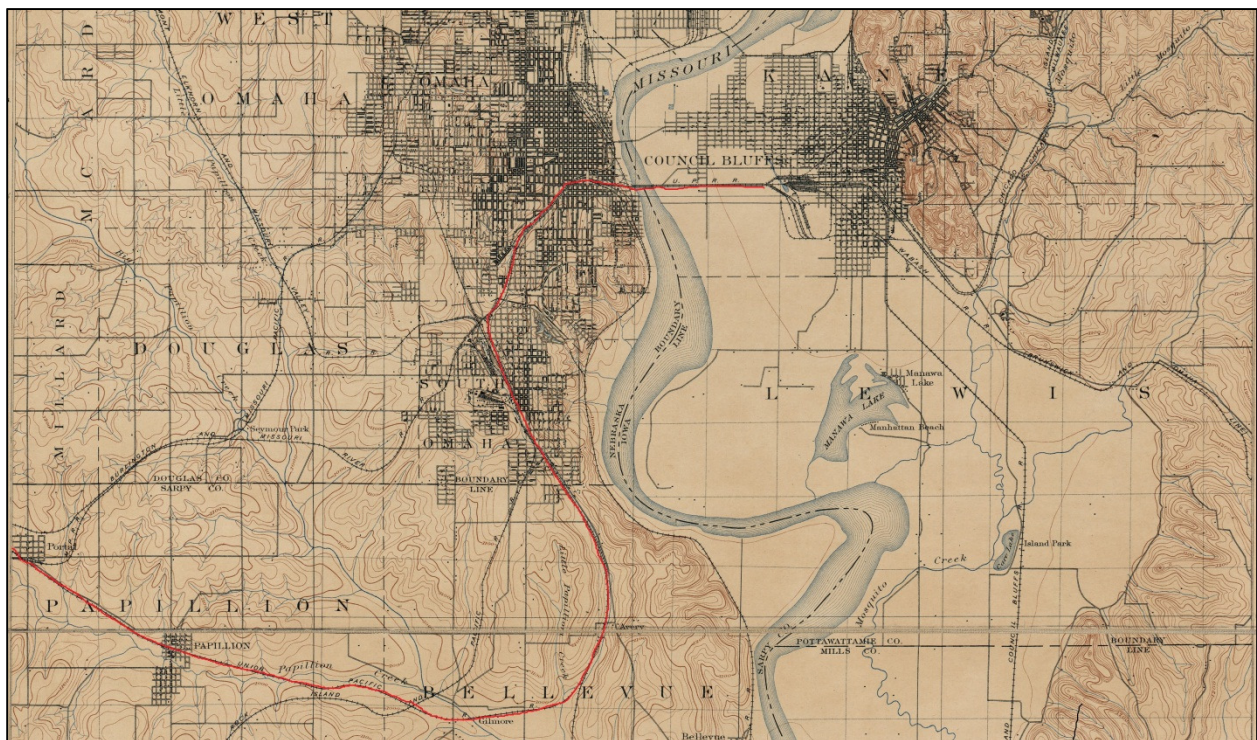
Nebraska Land Office 1880 map by H.R. Page, showing the Union Pacific Railroad's federal land grant corridors, awarding every other section within 20 miles of each flank of the right of way.

Source: U.S. Geological Survey 1898



## CHANGING THE GRADE

Construction commenced at Omaha in December 1863. By the end of 1864 a scant 20 miles had been graded, and no track had been laid (Klein 1987:40). The exact route of the track from Omaha connecting with the Platte Valley soon became a major issue. Dey had originally mapped a 21-mile length of the route as directly west as possible between Omaha and the Elkhorn River, which required a bridge over Papillion Creek for access west to the Platte, across an area of rolling hills. The hills and Papillion crossing required some of the most difficult grades expected in Nebraska, but Dey had convinced Durant that the directness of the route made up for extra grading work, and the President had approved it (Klein 1987:57). After the grading had begun, another surveyor, “consulting engineer” Silas Seymour, questioned the work and recommended a different route that would reduce the grade by forming an “oxbow” around the hills south and west of Omaha. Though it would require more time, work, and expense to abandon Dey’s plans in favor of Seymour’s, Durant shifted the line and Dey tendered his resignation in protest in January 1865 (Dodge 1965:12).



Engineer Silas Seymour’s 1865 “oxbow” line change, in red on the 1898 USGS “Omaha and Vicinity” topographical map, for Union Pacific’s meandering departure “west” from Omaha. Papillion Creek was the obstacle, traversed by 1898 by the Burlington and the Missouri Pacific, which by all accounts endured very hilly grades. UP’s “Lane Cutoff,” finished in 1908 across the Papillion valley, used equipment and technology not available to Dey or Seymour. The red line continues east, upper middle, along the UP bridge across the Missouri River between Omaha and Council Bluffs.

Source: U.S. Geological Survey 1898

The oxbow incident also raised doubts regarding the terminus at Omaha. The oxbow route placed the line closer to Bellevue, and Durant appeared to flirt with disregarding the executive order while moving resources to that town and directing that no permanent infrastructure be placed in Omaha (Klein 1987:58). Dodge at the time was in Leavenworth, Kansas, campaigning against hostile Native American groups and protested Durant's apparent maneuverings, urging him to keep Omaha as the terminus (Klein 1987). The controversy came to nothing but cost the Union Pacific time, money, and goodwill. The first rails in Omaha were laid on July 10, 1865, just after the end of the war, with little fanfare as track layers preceded south then west along the oxbow route change.

Track work continued west of Omaha, and the 1864 act required that the first 100 miles of track be completed by June 27, 1866. But shortages of hardwood and treated-cottonwood ties, transportation and labor issues, as well as money problems resulted in 100 miles of right-of-way merely graded by November 18, 1865, and only 28 miles of track installed, barely enough to complete Seymour's "oxbow" diversion (Klein 1987). Durant took the further advice of Seymour to install untreated cottonwood ties, as the limited "Burnettizer" zinc-treatment process in Omaha (Williams 1988:109) slowed their production. Durant reasoned that the railroad would be connected with an Iowa road in time for the ties to be replaced with treated wood in 3 to 4 years (Klein 1987). This change allowed Durant to complete another 40 miles of track by the time winter weather shut construction down in January 1866 (Klein 1987:71).



Andrew J. Russell photographed Union Pacific's superintendent of construction Samuel Reed in October 1866, at the 100<sup>th</sup> Meridian near Cozad, Nebraska, pondering how far the railroad had come. Note the poles at right, also lined up with the vanishing point, confirming that telegraph communication joined the overall project. Credit taken for the photograph by stereo-photograph printer and distributor J. Carbutt obscured Russell's work until 1969 during research for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Transcontinental Railroad's completion (Combs 1969:5-7, 17).

Source: Library of Congress



Improvements in infrastructure, primarily the use of barges on the Missouri River to deliver materials, finally increased the UP's progress in early 1866. Bringing further efficiency, Dodge now served as chief engineer on leave from the Army, and the UP installed Jack and Dan Casement as construction bosses (Klein 1987:72). Jack Casement had also been a Union Army general during the war, gaining vast experience building and rebuilding railroads during the conflict. By June 4, 1866, the 100-mile mark was reached just past present Duncan, Nebraska, and by the deadline in July, another 153 miles had been completed along the Platte as far as Grand Island (Klein 1987:74). The 1866 construction season closed in late December with the completion of 305 miles of track to the confluence of the North Platte River at present North Platte, Nebraska (Klein 1987:76).

## STATEHOOD

The Nebraska statehood movement was finally successful in 1866. After another failure regarding the constitutional convention, the Territorial Legislature decided to bypass the convention process entirely. The Republican-dominated group adopted a constitution that the population could later vote up or down (Olson and Naugle 1997:138). The effort was successful and a special election approved the draft constitution and elected public officials on June 2, 1866. The state was admitted to the Union on March 1, 1867, with its boundaries defined by the surrounding territories and the Missouri River (Olson and Naugle 1997:141–144).

The lack of rail lines west of the Missouri as well as through Iowa until the arrival of the Cedar Rapids & Missouri (Chicago and North Western) Railroad at Council Bluffs in 1867 (Perkins 1929:27) facilitated the continuance of overland migration. In this atmosphere prior to the transcontinental railroad's completion and with the majority of Nebraskans still settled south of the Platte River, the new state legislature meeting in Omaha voted to move the capital to Lancaster, south of the Platte on Salt Creek, and at the same time to change Lancaster's name to Lincoln. Nebraska voters then offered up to \$100,000 for a railroad to build to Lincoln, and in 1870 the **Burlington & Missouri River Railroad (B&MR)**, also popularly abbreviated "**B&M**," soon part of the **Burlington Route**) claimed part of the bounty and connected the state capital with a Missouri River landing at Plattsmouth, about 15 miles south of Omaha (Virtual Nebraska 2014). (The B&MR bridged the Missouri from Iowa into Plattsmouth in 1880).

## MISSOURI RIVER BRIDGE OPTIONS

Late in 1865, the issue of the proposed bridge over the Missouri was revisited because of the approaching CR&M across Iowa. Dodge was by no means a disinterested party in the coming Chicago rail connection, as he had purchased land at the expected Council Bluffs terminus several years before. In a report offered to a bridge committee formed by the Union Pacific, Dodge offered three locations: Telegraph Pole Crossing north of Omaha, Dey's original high-bluff line surveyed into South Omaha, and a location known as Child's Mill, 8 miles south of Omaha. Telegraph Pole Crossing required a low drawbridge to accommodate river traffic; the

advantage of the site was that it had a shallow rock bottom. Dey's original crossing was not recommended by Dodge because of the height and span required of the bridge, plus a 60-foot grade per mile on its approaches. Dodge endorsed Child's Mill, which would also require a high bridge, but the distance the bridge had to cross was the shortest of the three options and avoided the steep grades to reach the Omaha bluffs (Dodge 1965:64). Proposal of the Child's Mill crossing angered people in both Bellevue, who wanted the line moved closer to their town, and those in Omaha who felt that the bridge route had been promised to them. The committee accepted Dodge's report and recommendations, but amid the arguments over the location of the bridge, moved no further on the issue that year (Klein 1987:259).

At the end of 1867, the bridge issue came back to the forefront when the company ordered Dodge to make estimates for the land needed to construct the low drawbridge at Child's Mill. Telegraph Pole Crossing's high bridge location had been rejected after further investigation revealed that the river north of Omaha was shifting course and a bridge would soon be rendered useless (Klein 1987:260). Under continued pressure from Omaha merchants, Dodge reconsidered his recommendation and accepted Dey's original route in the interests of pacifying Omaha and its investors, which included Durant (Dodge 1965:64).

## **DISCOVERING SHERMAN PASS**

The year 1866 saw the resumption of surveys in the Platte and Republican Valleys. Ogden Edwards, assisted by James Evans and a military escort, completed the Platte River survey past the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian at present Cozad, Nebraska, 45 miles short of the North Platte confluence, and returned the 250 surveyed miles back to Omaha (Klein 1987).

The questions of whether to follow the Oregon Trail through South Pass, or the Republican River to Denver, were resolved later in the year. Dodge, still in the Army, was put in charge of its Indian Campaigns of 1865 and 1866. During his expeditions farther west, Dodge kept the route of the Union Pacific at the forefront of his mind, and would often take a small detachment with him to explore possible routes beyond Nebraska. In 1866 while returning from the Powder River Campaign near Lodgepole Creek in the Laramie Mountains, Dodge and a few men were separated from the rest of the contingent while looking for a pass to cross this section of range, when they were engaged by a group of Crow. During the skirmish, Dodge found himself moving up a ridge, and after the cavalry rescued the small group, he observed that the ridge possessed a low grade eastward down to the plains below to the Lodgepole Valley. Dodge named the pass and its summit after his commander General William Tecumseh Sherman, and its discovery settled the question of the route in Dodge's mind. Sherman Pass allowed the Union Pacific to abandon the much higher and much farther north South Pass Route, as well as the Denver alternative (Dodge 1965; Klein 1987).



Andrew J. Russell's summer 1868 photograph of dignitaries assembled at Fort Sanders, Wyoming, to tour construction of the Union Pacific on its way west on the Platte Valley Route. Grenville Dodge is on the far left in the original image (Combs 1969:26–27), but was cropped from this Library of Congress print. Generals Philip Sheridan (second from left), U.S. Grant (straw hat at left center), and William T. Sherman (center) join Thomas Durant (straw hat sixth from right) and other military and civilian observers.

Source: Library of Congress

## HELL ON WHEELS

The severe winter of 1866 and 1867 delayed further work on the railroad. In the spring, melting ice on the Loup Fork and in other places along the line resulted in much of the completed route being washed over. East of Grand Island melt water overflowed a stream and destroyed a half-mile length of track by washing away the embankment. In May 1867 Dodge was able to resume construction west from the camp town of North Platte, where he crossed the Platte River and continued along the north side of the diverging South Platte. Due to its status as a major Union Pacific supply base, an influx of railroad workers combined with traders, gamblers, saloon keepers, and overland travelers had transformed the camp of North Platte into a boomtown referred to as “hell on wheels” in reference to its nefarious association with the railroad (Klein 1987:100). A traveler documented saloons and gambling halls in almost every building, and what he considered a general disregard for morality and the law. Fighting and murder were so common that a vigilante committee had been organized in an attempt to control the chaos (Bain 1999:344–346; Klein 1987:100–101).

The spring of 1867 saw an increase in Native American raiding activities and, with the Army stretched thin, railroad workers, many of whom were former soldiers, armed themselves (Dodge 1965:15; Klein 1987:98). Despite the harassment, work continued, and by June 24, 1867, the

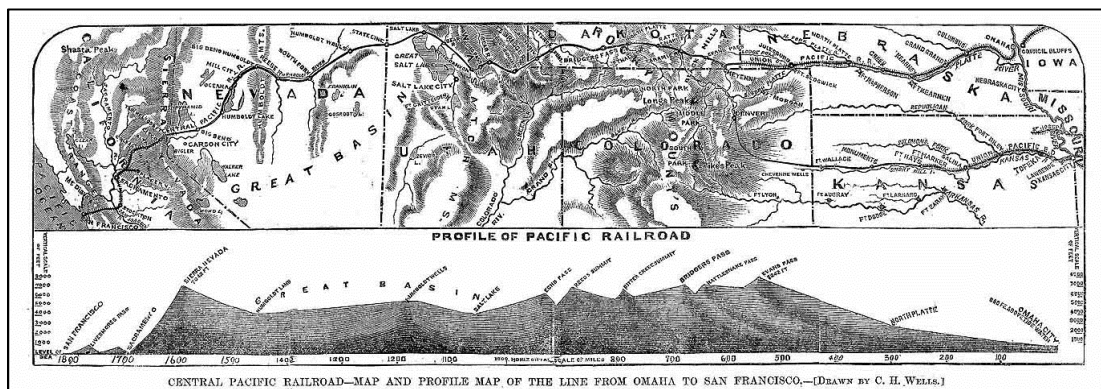
crews had laid 374 miles of track along the north bank of the South Platte and briefly crossed the border into Colorado Territory, ending at Julesburg and the confluence of Lodgepole Creek (Klein 1987:100).



Union Pacific's c. 1875 wood-frame, Italianate Style railroad depot at North Platte, about 10 years after its "Hell on Wheels" origin as a supply base for building the railroad. This substantial and seemingly permanent improvement was probably part of Jay Gould's upgrades to the railroad after gaining control in 1873.

Source: 1800s Postcard from Google Images

As a result, the supply base was moved to Julesburg, Colorado. By June the chaos that was Hell on Wheels had moved on from North Platte to the small town in the Colorado Territory, swelling its population from 40 to 4,000 (Klein 1987:101). Following Lodgepole Creek northwesterly from Julesburg back into Nebraska (the Colorado interlude totaled about 9 miles), Casement's track crews continued west to the next Hell on Wheels that became Sidney, Nebraska, then 57 more miles to the Wyoming line and on to Cheyenne—itsself briefly Hell on Wheels—and then across Dodge's revelation of Sherman Pass, the highest point on the Union Pacific.



Route (top of graphic) and Topographic Profile (bottom) maps of the entire First Transcontinental Railroad, from the December 7, 1867, issue of *Harper's Weekly*. Omaha is at the far right, and the Platte Valley's gentle grade west is obvious from the profile's perspective.

Source: University of Nebraska, Lincoln, online.



## AFTER THE GOLDEN SPIKE

After completion of the Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869, with the meeting of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads in Promontory, Utah, emphasis shifted from building the line to running it and making it a sustainable enterprise. The one-time destination of Denver connected independently with the UP at Cheyenne in 1870, on a 100-mile branch built with Denver funding and federal land grants along the South Platte Valley as the Denver Pacific Railway. Physically, by 1870 the UP Transcontinental line needed immediate repairs, especially in Nebraska where, true to the Casement brothers' expectations, the oldest untreated cottonwood ties already required replacement (Klein 1987:238).

Provision of public and military through-passenger service began immediately, and overland stage and wagon travel to the same destinations, including a sustained foot and cart passage of Mormons to Salt Lake City, ended overnight (Klein 1987:268). Passenger service along the Transcontinental Railroad was most challenging for want of a Missouri River bridge. Even though the Transcontinental was complete, the UP's crossing over the Missouri was still facilitated by transferring the CR&M (Chicago & North Western) and M&M (Rock Island) Railroads' Chicago passengers via a ferry that required long waits (Klein 1987:269).



The first railroad bridge across the Missouri River, started in 1868 and completed in 1872, spanned from Council Bluffs on the right, and west into Omaha in the left distance. The wood trestle at right was apparently in the process of being buried in earthen fill, a common practice of the time prior to preservative treatment of bridging timbers, and perhaps adding rigidity to the bridge's lofty approach.

Source: Union Pacific Railroad; copy provided by Rails West Museum

Work began on UP's Missouri River bridge in 1868 at Dey's first and Dodge's final location, and continued into 1870. Dodge's bridge design strung a series of 11 iron "Post" through trusses (named for engineer Simeon S. Post's patented design [bridgehunter.com 2014]), resting on

paired iron piers sunk with the use of forced air through deep sand to reach bedrock below (Klein 1987:262). A high wood trestle and earthen fill carried the Iowa approach to the trusses, which arrived in Nebraska at the level of south Omaha's natural bluff.

Bridge construction halted in 1870 when funds ran out; the company charter did not allow it to build a bridge, and as a result no securities could be issued to pay for the work (Dodge 1965:64; Klein 1987:259). Out of cash, the UP directors instructed Dodge to organize a separate bridge company to interest other Iowa railroads in a collaborative venture to finance and finish the bridge, and he presented a bill to Congress to enable the deal. But those Iowa railroads demanded a connection on the Iowa side instead of at Omaha—in other words, requiring every UP train to cross into Iowa, rather than for all other railroads to cross into Nebraska, thus ensuring the center of commerce in Council Bluffs—which ignited Omaha-funded opposition against such an arrangement, and resulted in defeat of the bill in the Senate (Dodge 1965:64).

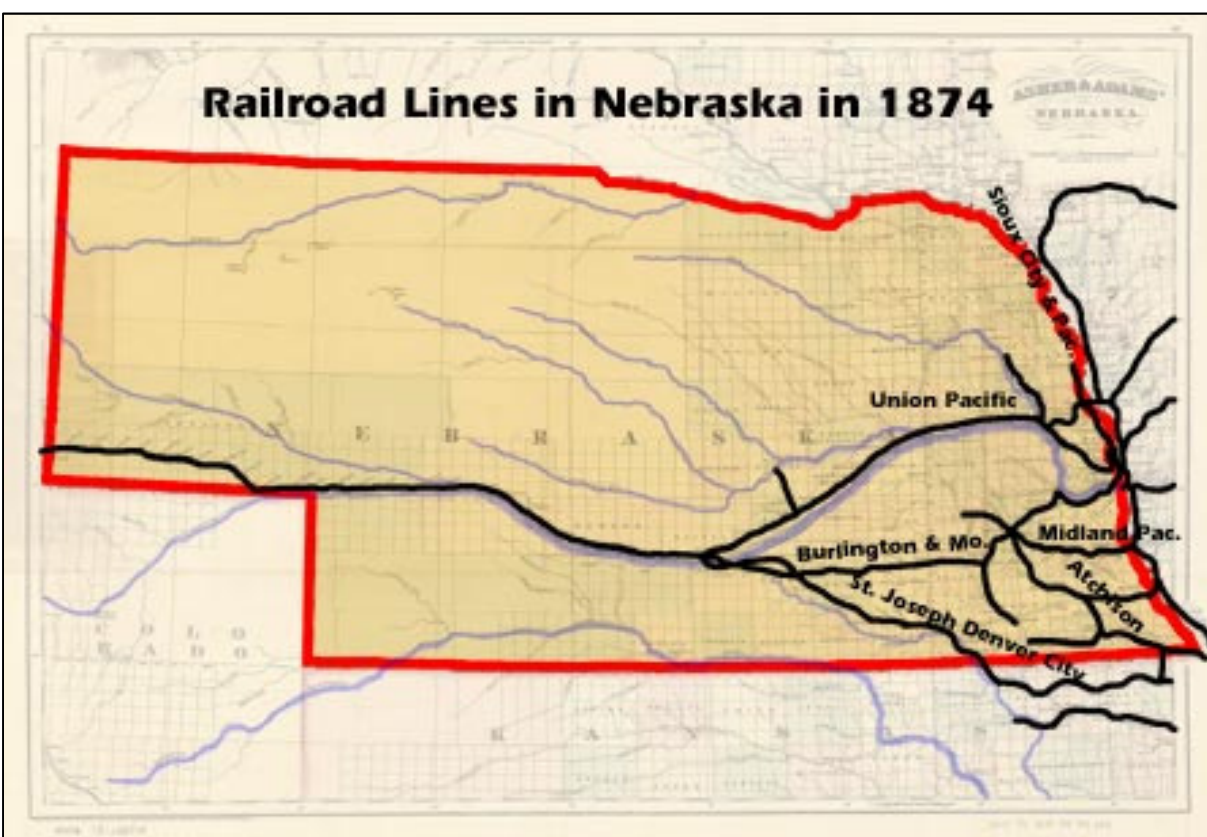
After the passage by Congress of an adjusted bill in 1871 authorizing UP's completion of the bridge through sale of government-backed bonds, the bridge finally opened in March 1872. UP probably charged the M&M/Rock Island to cross the bridge and interchange with UP in Omaha, until the Supreme Court resolved the simmering dispute between Council Bluffs and Omaha over the true intended Pacific Railroad terminus in 1875. The ruling favored Council Bluffs, which meant a great deal to that city in the form of exchanging freight traffic and the corresponding large force of employees to operate and maintain the locomotives and trains of at least seven railroads. The designation also placed in 1878 a large UP passenger-transfer depot and hotel at Council Bluffs, where eventually six railroads from the east dropped off their patrons to board UP trains heading across its Missouri River bridge into the West (Klein 1987:278).

However, unfailing Council Bluffs supporter and resident Grenville Dodge conceded that since UP had located its headquarters in rival Omaha a decade earlier, the benefits of that business decision far outweighed the 1875 legal nod to Council Bluffs. "This came too late to cure the mischief," he later wrote of the Supreme Court ruling, "as the Union Pacific had its interests centered in Omaha, and its offices, and the Iowa roads [from the east] had made their contracts and gone there [to Omaha,] and the Bluffs had only reaped the benefit...that the [inevitable] growth of business has forced to them" (Dodge 1965:65–66).

## **OTHER CHICAGO, IOWA, AND KANSAS RAILROADS ENTER NEBRASKA**

UP's strategic Missouri River bridge coaxed rivals and Chicago connections to Council Bluffs, starting with the C&NW and Rock Island, who had been transferring freight and passengers to Omaha by ferry since 1867 and 1869, respectively. The State of Nebraska passed its Land Grant Act of 1869, attracting attention of other railroads to enter the state (Grant 1996:51). Chicago-based C&NW and Burlington gathered sufficient financing, steel, and state land-grant commitments to enter Nebraska on their own, in different places and at first through subsidiary

companies. Burlington's B&MR in 1869 became the second railroad into Omaha (see below), and in 1870 the first line into the new capital of Lincoln (see above), via a Missouri River landing from Plattsmouth south of Omaha. Other railroad connections to the Transcontinental Railroad within Nebraska other than Omaha, envisioned by the 1862 Pacific Railroad Act, soon brought more competitive enterprises into the state (see 1874 map below). Most of these lines exercised federal land-grant rights to make connections with the UP at various points west of Omaha. Their investors and connections thus linked the Transcontinental and the West through shorter distances with ports and population centers of Minneapolis-St. Paul and Milwaukee to the northeast, and St. Joseph and St. Louis to the southeast. All these lines also sought to accumulate granger business and establish on-line towns along these routes (see Chapter IV), and to gain political influence by reaching Lincoln.



Nebraska railroad extensions in 1874, just 5 years after completion of the Union Pacific, and 1 year after the Panic of 1873 and Union Pacific's acquisition by financier Jay Gould. The railroad companies shown (detailed above and in Chapter IV) all received federal and/or state land grants to develop new towns and farming markets primarily in the southeastern "humid" part of the state.

Source: nebraskastudies.org

- The **Midland Pacific Railway** started west from the river port of Nebraska City in 1866 with considerable federal land grant assistance, and reached Lincoln in 1871. ☞ The line started an incomplete branch from Lincoln northwest toward Seward by 1872, and completed another south from Nebraska City to the river port of Brownville in 1875,

before acquisition by the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad in 1876 (NeSHS 2002; Overton 1965:101).

- Under the name “**Burlington & Missouri River in Nebraska**,” the Burlington-controlled company extended granger branches beyond Lincoln to Seward and Crete, and from Crete built west through Hastings to connect with the UP at Kearney by 1872 (Burlington Route Historical Society 2014; NeSHS 2004; Overton 1965:101).
- The **Sioux City & Pacific Railroad** was a Cedar Rapids & Missouri subsidiary that initially crossed the Missouri River from California Junction, Iowa, with barges to Blair, Nebraska, to qualify for federal land grants in the state. ¶ SC&P initially laid rails in Iowa north to Sioux City in 1868, in preparation for entering Nebraska at its northeastern corner, as allowed under the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862. ¶ Then in 1869 SC&P constructed west from the river landing of Blair (named for Eastern railroad magnate and C&NW financier John Insley Blair) to Fremont, Nebraska, for connection to the UP mainline. ¶ SC&P built the railroad bridge at Blair in 1883 and came under full C&NW control in 1884 (Grant 1996:49–50).



The Burlington & Missouri River Railroad moved west beyond Lincoln in 1871 to establish towns and secure business from as many farmers as possible in southeastern Nebraska. Dorchester, founded in 1871 on the B&MR as the ‘D’ in its Asylum-to-Newark alphabet towns, still seems heavily dependent on its railroad in this 1930s view.

Postcard: Google

- The **Omaha & Southwestern [or South Western] Railroad**, second successful railroad in Omaha and chartered to build southwest to Lincoln, constructed only 15 miles south along the Missouri River floodplain to the Platte River in early 1870. ¶ The B&MR acquired O&SW soon after, eventually bridging the Platte, connecting with the Atchison



& Kansas (below) and Missouri Pacific (Chapter V) for connections to Kansas City and St. Louis (Andreas 1882). ¶ Burlington's O&SW entity also built from Crete south to Beatrice by 1872 (Overton 1965:101).

- The **Omaha & Northwestern [or North Western] Railroad**, chartered to build from Omaha to Niobrara, constructing only 25 miles north along the Missouri River floodplain to Blair in 1870. The C&NW utilized the O&NW to enter Omaha, as the city's third railroad, from C&NW's 1869 SC&P (above) Blair-to-Fremont line (Andreas 1882).
- The **Atchison & Nebraska Railroad** built north from Atchison, Kansas, to Falls City, Nebraska, in 1871. ¶ The line acquired the **Atchison, Lincoln & Columbus** and continued northwest to Lincoln, arriving in 1872 (Andreas 1882). Burlington acquired the two lines in 1880 (Watkins 1913:342).



Falls City developed as a railroad town with accompanying yards and roundhouse when the Missouri Pacific met the Atchison & Nebraska here in 1871.

Source: Postcard, Google

- The initially independent **St. Joseph & Denver City Railroad** moved from Missouri and Kansas up the Big Sandy Creek Valley to reach Alexandria, Nebraska, then established a series of alphabet towns to Hastings in 1872 (see Chapter IV). The company finished the first St. Joseph, Missouri, bridge on the Missouri River in 1873, then reorganized in 1877 as the **St. Joseph & Western**. ¶ As the **St. Joseph & Grand Island**, the same company pushed from Hastings, Nebraska, north to meet the UP mainline at Grand Island in 1879,

as allowed in the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862. ¶ As the **Kansas City & Omaha Railway**, the company in 1886–1887 built a wandering triangle connecting Fairbury west to Alma, and north to Stromsburg. ¶ UP in 1880 gained control of KC&O, which receivers reorganized in 1896, and Burlington acquired in 1902; UP regained control as the StJ&GI in the 1900s (UtahRails.net 2014; Bartels and Reisdorff 2002b:36).

## CHAPTER IV: PERMANENT TOWNS (1866–1905)

### RAILROADS AND TOWN ESTABLISHMENT

Railroads played a central role in the settlement of Nebraska, and most prominently the state's three most extensive railroads, the Union Pacific, subsidiaries of the Burlington Lines/CB&Q, and affiliates of the Chicago & North Western. The UP with its 4.8 million acres of federal land grant in Nebraska founded townsites through its affiliates the **Credit Foncier** company and possibly the **Wood River Improvement Company**, and through their own internal Land Development Division. The CB&Q, with 2.4 million federally granted acres in Nebraska and more than 300,000 acres of state lands, established online towns through its **Burlington Railroad Townsite Company** also known as the **Lincoln Town Site [or Land] Company**; **South Platte Land Company**; and in northeastern counties the **Pacific Townsite [or Town-Site] Company**. The Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley, the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha (the Omaha Road), and the Omaha & Northwestern Railroads, all subsidiaries of the Chicago & North Western, received grants of more than 180,000 acres of state lands and developed townsites indirectly through the **Pioneer Townsite Company** and possibly the **North Nebraska Townsite Company** for Omaha Road towns. The independent St. Joseph & Denver City Railroad received more than 380,000 acres in federal land, and apparently used the **Nebraska Land and Townsite Company** across south-central Nebraska (Olson 1955:170). All these companies, their practices, and example towns are detailed below.

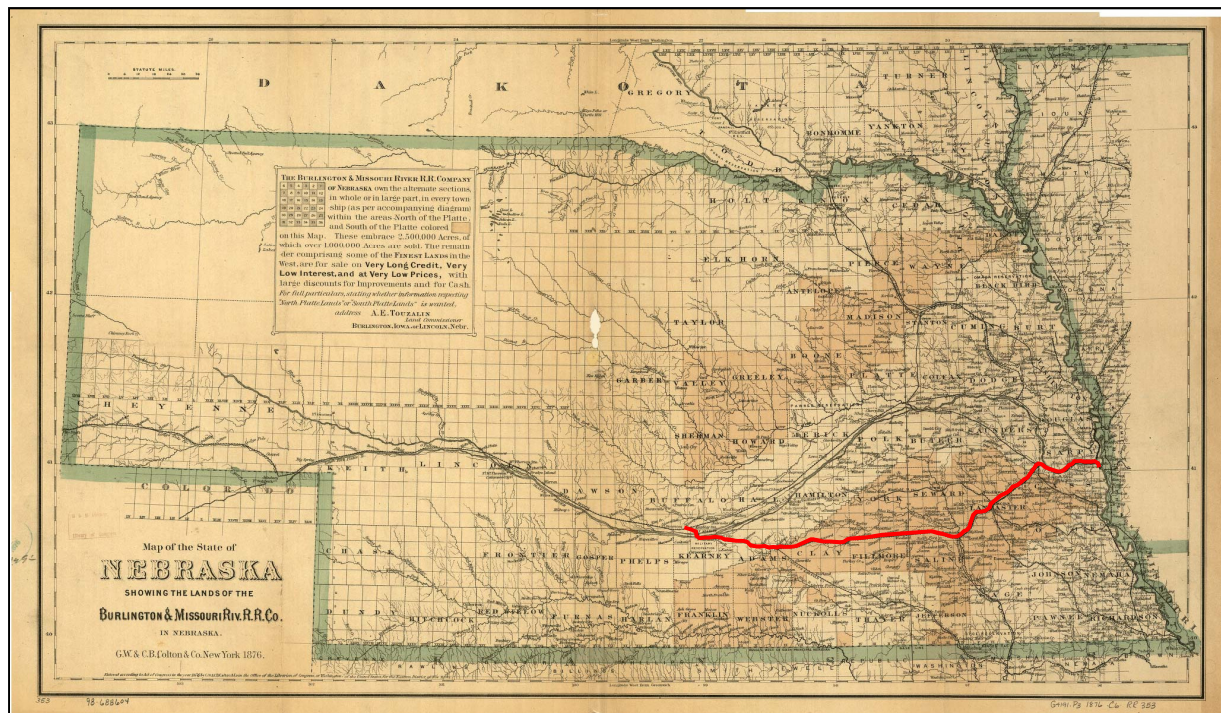
“Railroad colonization,” as it is sometimes described, was supported by the vast unsettled lands in Nebraska, favorable government support in the form of tax relief and land grants from federal and state governments, and a near monopoly on transportation to and from the settled areas. In terms of the land alone, the railroads had a tremendous advantage over traditional settlement and town development. Federal support of the completion of a Transcontinental Railroad encouraged federal assistance to larger companies. The states, who saw the advantage of having more railroads choose routes through their borders, equally saw an advantage to supporting the endeavor. In the East, railroads typically connected communities that already existed, but in the West where settlement was new, the presence of the railroad could mean the survival or failure of a new community. More realistically, in the western part of Nebraska during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, absence of a railroad meant that a community would never exist at all (Olson 1955).

Supporting railroad development in most cases meant access to land. In the mid-nineteenth century, most of the country favored railroad expansion, and most citizens supported the idea of providing land grants to railroads to further that expansion. The land grants were intended, not just to provide a source of funding for the railroad companies, but also to encourage further investment from private, state, and even foreign capital (Cochran 1950). Although the economic value of the Transcontinental Railroad was widely understood, many companies were hesitant to invest in a railroad that crossed vast expanses of undeveloped territories. Nationwide the land

grant system had proven an effective means of paying for railroad construction. Some railroad companies saw enough revenue from land grant sales to pay for their construction costs outright, and in some cases the land grants provided a separate revenue source that outstripped the financial gains of the rail lines themselves (Cochran 1950; Olson 1955).

In Nebraska, approximately 16.6 percent of the state's total acreage was given to the railroads from state and federal governments, most of which came from federal land grants (Olson 1955). The two largest railroad companies in Nebraska were the UP, which crossed the entire state from Omaha west through Sidney and Potter, then on to Wyoming, and the B&MR, which crossed half of the state from Plattsmouth west through Lincoln to the UP mainline at Kearney. Although some state lands were provided to the railroads, the overwhelming amount of free land provided to them came from the federal government.

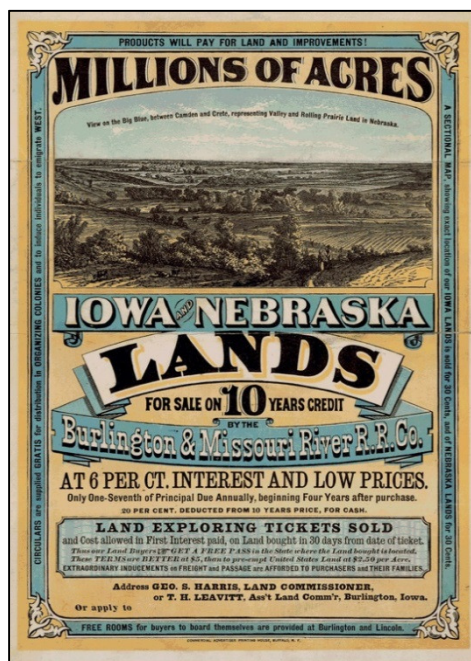
For both the UP and B&MR, the federal government granted 20 sections of land (12,800 acres) for every mile of track (Olson 1950). The sections provided by the government included alternating sections forming a checkerboard pattern that for UP extended 20 miles from the proposed railroad alignment. When the B&MR was to receive their land grants, the federal government compensated for areas already assigned to UP by allowing the B&MR to select lands from areas outside of the 20-mile buffer of their own alignment. These additional lands were selected to the north and south of the UP transcontinental line where those conflicts occurred (maps below).



Map of Nebraska in 1876 showing location of B&MR land grant lands (in faint orange) and alignment of the B&MR highlighted in red (added).

In disposing of the land grants, the railroads sought to balance two different financial interests: immediate capital to pay for construction costs, and sources of revenue for the continued operation of the line. Overall, however, the railroads understood that disposal of the land needed to be about more than just land sales to new settlers; it was about the development of communities and, in their business focus, consistent markets for their services. New towns would in turn rely upon the railroads to support their economic development. Settlers needed goods to buy, and merchants and farmers needed a population to buy their goods. The disposal of land grants (and other lands acquired by the railroads) should thus be understood in two lights: the functional view of how the railroads marketed and disposed of the land, and the strategic view of how the railroads chose to dispose of the land in ways most favorable to their financial gain (Dick 1975; Hudson 1982).

Land development went hand in hand with the expansion of railroads across Nebraska. Depending on when and where the railroad was being built, and the amount of settlement prior to its arrival, land acquisition could follow several different courses. For railroads building through settled areas, lands were sometimes sold or donated to the railroad by landowners (Olson and Naugle 1997). Rather than being seen as a detriment to their land, many land owners saw having a railroad on their property as a benefit particularly if they could sell their property as a potential rail stop or townsite. Settlers and land speculators alike recognized that securing a stop along any railroad could be the deciding factor in the survival of the community. The railroads too, saw great opportunity in taking lands along their alignments and developing them into townsites which could be sold off to incoming settlers.



Source: University of Nebraska, Lincoln online



The railroads encouraged settlement of their granted lands through advertising, and through promotion by branches of the companies known as land departments, in the Eastern United States and Europe. Between 1867 and 1870, the population of Nebraska more than doubled from 50,000 to 122,993. By 1905 the B&MR, now part of the Chicago-based Burlington Route, had sold the entirety of its 2,374,090 acres of granted lands in Nebraska (Olson and Naugle 1997:165–166).

## **THE ARMS-LENGTH RELATIONSHIPS**

The relationships between land development companies and the railroads varied. Some railroads, like the UP, had their own internal land development divisions, while other companies brought only loose contractual arrangements with a development company to build a town around where the railroad planned to go. Most of the land development companies operated in a murky space in between these two types of relationships. Often close financial connections existed between the railroad companies and the land development companies. In some cases active railroad employees, or former railroad employees serving as the presidents or secretaries of land development companies, used their knowledge of where the rails would go, and where stops needed to be to establish towns in locations most favorable to both interests. In some cases there were more traditional business partnerships with development companies to establish towns along a specific line (Hudson 1982; Olson and Naugle 1997).

The major railroads with extensive mainlines and branch line systems in Nebraska—UP, Burlington, and C&NW—all had strong partnerships with land development companies. The UP, in its early expansion through Nebraska, worked with George F. Train's Credit Foncier, which helped establish neighborhoods in Omaha, and the core properties in Columbus (Crowe 2014). Most of UP's townsites along its transcontinental line within Nebraska were either platted by the railroad itself or by private interests connected to Train and his Credit Foncier. UP may have utilized the Wood River Improvement Company for 1880s branchline-community development, particularly on the UP-backed Kearney & Black Hills Railway of 1887, which established the Custer County towns of Oconto, Callaway, and Arnold (NeSHS 2006:9).

The Lincoln Town Site Company appears to have been independent from the CB&Q and subsidiaries, but obviously worked closely with the B&MR expansions in Nebraska to develop townsites along the rails. Along the B&MR line from Lincoln west to Kearney, the Lincoln Town Site Company named newly established towns in alphabetical order: Asylum, Benton, Crete, Dorchester, Exeter, Fairmont, Grafton, Harvard, Inland, Juniata, Kenesaw, and Lowell by 1872, skipping 'M' but adding Newark before bridging the Platte River and connecting with the UP at Kearney. The B&MR and the Lincoln Company resumed southwest from Kearney in 1883 (NeSHS 2004) and made no attempt to continue the trend west to Sterling, Colorado. The CB&Q in its long secondary mainline, Grand Island & Wyoming Central extending northwest from Grand Island to the Black Hills of South Dakota, worked with the Lincoln Town Site

Company to found towns such as Berwyn, Anslemo, Mason City, Seneca, and Alliance (Perkey 1982).



Kearney, Nebraska, began life in 1848 as a frontier fort, jolted into a boomtown and Hell on Wheels with railroad construction in 1866, then after 1871 settled into a mainline community depicted in this c. 1900 view. The “spiked helmet” cupola on this 1891 Romanesque Revival Style building was intended to provide a visual landmark for approaching Union Pacific and Burlington & Missouri River trains.

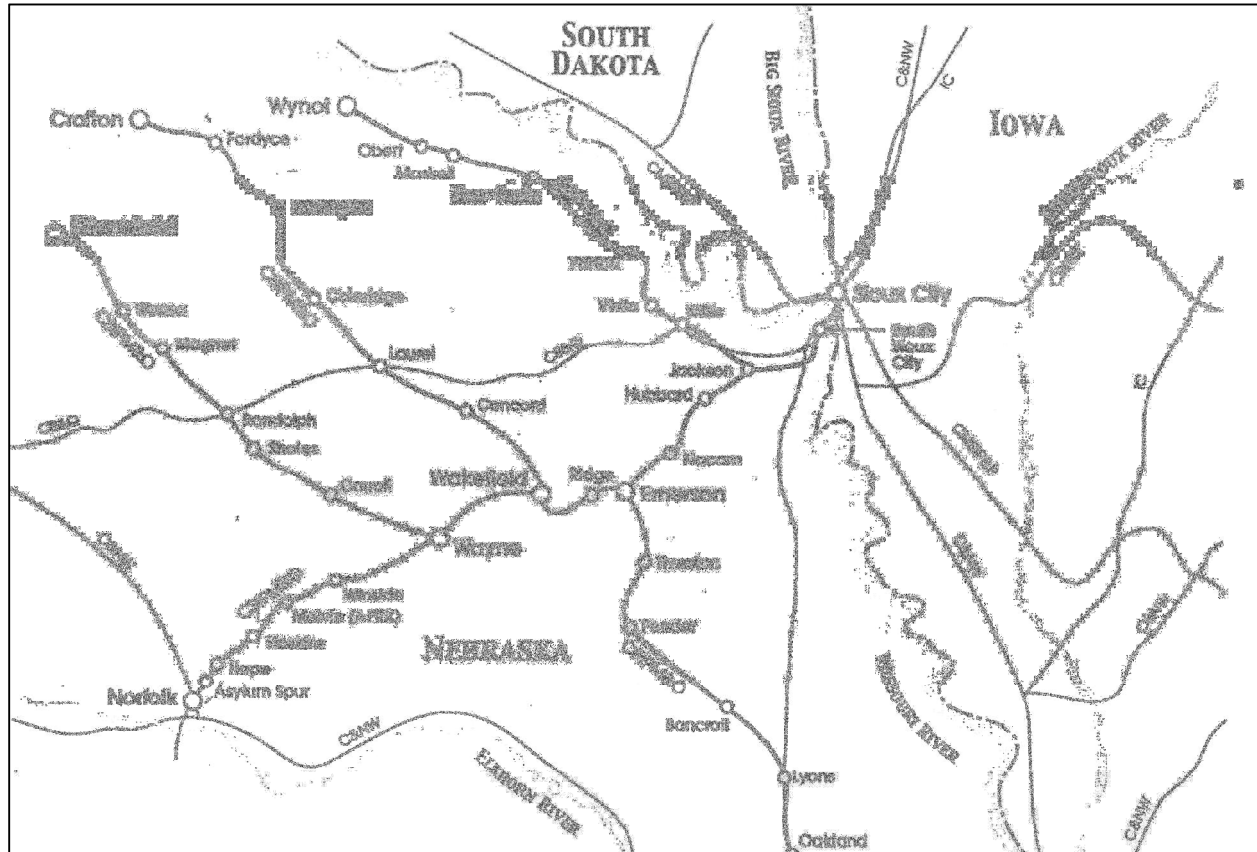
Source: Postcard, Google

Many Burlington-Lincoln towns, even the capital city of Lincoln, have a “Touzalin Street,” probably named for B&MR’s 1870s general passenger agent A.E. Touzalin. The popular gentleman may or may not have moonlighted with the Lincoln Town Site Company’s parallel business (University of Nebraska, Lincoln 2014).

Another railroad, the initially independent St. Joseph & Denver City, built north from Kansas and passed westward, conveniently founding an alphabet-series of Nebraska towns: Alexandria, Belvidere, Carleton, Davenport, Edgar (at first Eden), Fairfield, Glenville, and Hastings by 1872. In 1879 as the StJ & Grand Island, the railroad built a cutoff from Hastings straight north to join the UP transcontinental line at Grand Island. The StJ&DC appears to have been affiliated with the Nebraska Land and Townsite Company in founding its alphabet of towns. Most of these settlements west to Hastings remained very small farming communities, never linked in later years by a major automobile road or highway (Perkey 1982:44). (Today, 2014, they are on UP’s double-track coal-train corridor to Kansas, the lower Midwest, and the Southeast).

The CB&Q in 1890 built a line—as the Nebraska & Western, aka Pacific Short Line and Sioux City & Ogden—from Covington/South Sioux City west across northeastern Nebraska to O’Neill.

This line placed the Burlington in direct competition with several granger branch lines of the C&NW's Omaha Road and FE&MR (map below). The Pacific Townsite Company established towns along the line where C&NW had not, including Osmond, Plainview, and Orchard (Grant 1996:53; Perkey 1982:152).



Map of railroad lines prior to 1978 in Dixon, Thurston, Cedar, Wayne, Knox, and Pierce Counties, illustrating the fierce competition between railroads to serve every possible farming community in the era before Good Roads. Towns founded in the 1870s by C&NW affiliates FE&MR along the Elkhorn River and CStPM&O (darkest lines) out of South Sioux City dominated these counties until 1890 when the CB&O laid tracks from South Sioux City west to O'Neill (off map to left/west).

Source: van Delden 2011

The Pioneer Townsite Company had a similar arms-length relationship with the Chicago & North Western subsidiaries. The company started as an adjunct of the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad, controlled by the C&NW as early as 1884 (Hoover and Zimmerman 1989). Little documentation is available beyond secondary sources connecting the two companies, but the relationship appears strong enough between the two to support a common assertion that the Pioneer Townsite Company continued to operate as a subsidiary of the C&NW Railroad. The Pioneer Townsite Company established towns such as Goehner, Thayer, and Gresham along the FE&MV in southeastern Nebraska, and towns like Cody and Crookstown along the “Cowboy Line” of the C&NW along the Elkhorn River across northern Nebraska.



Before affiliating with the Pioneer Townsite Company, the C&NW established towns through its subsidiary Western Townsite Company, creating towns like Howell, Clarkson, and Davey.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNSITES**

Development along the railroad lines first concentrated on construction of townsites; farming and other industries, developers trusted, would emerge through free markets from these planned-community beginnings. Many new towns began as railroad-construction staging areas, facilitating the handling of equipment and supplies and providing food and housing for railroad laborers. Along the UP, communities like Fremont, Ft. Kearny, North Platte, and Sidney served as major “end of the line” towns that later grew into some of the larger towns along the completed railroad. The placement of towns along the railroad was not based solely on the practical requirements of construction, however. Railroad companies recognized the present and future financial gains of these communities as they maximized the benefits that land grants offered them, and held control over every mile of profit along their rail lines. Towns placed every 7 to 10 miles along the line were not only convenient for water and fuel stops, but also to develop independent communities on adjacent railroad lands that would discourage the development of towns by multiple private land buyers. In essence, the railroads sought to saturate settlement along the rails from the onset, to ensure that every successful town along the railroad was their town (Hudson 1982; Olson 1955).

Railroads partnered with land development companies to survey, plat, and settle the towns along their lines. In most cases, these land development companies were owned or controlled by the railroads themselves, or by entrepreneurial railroad officials. Because land grants only gave the railroads alternating sections, the railroad companies encouraged partnering land companies, friends, and employees to pre-empt or homestead the open sections so they could develop and control those areas as well. Technically, outside parties were not allowed to establish townsites within the limits of the UP land grants until the land had been surveyed. When the survey was completed, the railroads ran the risk that competing town companies would immediately establish independent towns (Hudson 1982). To combat this, the UP chose locations along their alignment prior to the survey. Because the UP was limited in their sale of the land until the terms of the grant were completed, they were often forced to develop lands on private parcels first. These competing land restrictions sometimes resulted in unusual arrangements for railroad towns. Grand Island, for example, was first planned as a construction staging area for the railroad, then after its survey, the heart of the town ended up in one of the state-owned school sections (Sections 16 and 36 of every township are designated for state ownership to pay for school construction and operation). The UP purchased that land from the state to develop the townsite prior to being able to develop their lands on the neighboring section (Hudson 1982).

The location and development of townsites along the railroad was organized around their strategy of maintaining an economic monopoly. Doing so required more than just planning the locations of these lines; they also needed to ensure that each town was able to support its settlers

and the railroad. Townsite companies sought to maximize the economic potential of each town by understanding what the needs of a specific community would be and marketing to those types of businesses. Prior to selling off lots, a townsite company would send an agent to the area to look at what services were available in neighboring communities and determine what kinds of businesses to target. Could the new community support a lawyer, a newspaper, or a wagon maker if these businesses were already established in neighboring communities? Railroad companies and their development partners also had an interest in making sure that the businesses that moved into their communities thrived. To maximize the number of available businesses, they promoted specialized shops over general stores. This encouraged more businesses to be present, making the towns look fuller, and thus increasing the number of residents that would require these services.

Townsite developers took further steps to promote small specialized businesses. Commercial lots platted in the community were kept small. This helped sell those lots faster and prevented larger companies from coming in and purchasing multiple adjacent lots for larger stores (Hudson 1982). To further promote smaller businesses, the townsite companies would discount alternating lots so that they would sell more quickly and prevent large companies from buying multiple lots. This approach had the added effect of reserving some lots for later sale, once the town was established, and allowing the town companies to charge higher rates for them (Hudson 1982). By limiting the size and cost of certain lots within the townsites, developers and the railroads attempted to develop the kinds of communities that would be likely to survive and provide the strongest profits. Because the profits would be highest in a strong and thriving community, these efforts also benefitted its new settlers.

## **SETTLEMENT ALONG THE RAILROADS**

Along the rails and towns located along them, the railroad companies needed people, settlers to populate their newly created communities. Following the Civil War, the U.S. entered a period of Westward expansion and new immigration, as newly opened Western lands attracted swarms of settlers seeking cheap or outright free land. This expansion was promoted heavily by railroad companies and land developers who sought to attract these people through aggressive promotional campaigns (Cochran 1950; Olson 1955). The railroads sent agents to the East Coast and to Europe to entice immigrants, and drafted brochures and fliers that sang the praises of Nebraska's rich farmland. They sent lecturers all around the country to talk about the benefits of settlement, and helped support the Nebraska State Board of Agriculture to show crops and other locally produced goods at fairs and expositions. The railroad and land development companies also held land excursions at various times throughout the railroad expansion. Land excursions were events held at the westward extent of the railroad, where the new "end of the line" town was subsequently being promoted for permanent settlement. The events were marketing campaigns that included speeches, entertainers, and even choreographed performances by Pawnee Scouts (Crowe 2014). These excursions allowed land companies to promote their town

sites and attendees could purchase land, applying the cost of their railroad fare to their purchase of the land (Olson and Naugle 1997:165).

The marketing campaigns proved very successful at drawing settlers into Nebraska. By the 1920s, the UP and B&MR had disposed of more than 7 million acres of land in Nebraska. In the eastern part of the state, most of the settlers came from the eastern United States and Europe, while in its western counties most of the settlers were from earlier waves of immigrants to eastern Nebraska. Marketing in Europe also encouraged group settlement, attracting whole ethnic communities or religious groups to settle together. Several Swedish communities settled in Polk and Saunders Counties along the UP line, and in Colfax County the UP settled 60 families from Nova Scotia. The railroads also attracted groups of German-Russian settlers and Czechs (Bohemians). These settled together within one or several nearby townships and, with a shared language and religion, formed tight supportive communities (Olson and Naugle 1997).

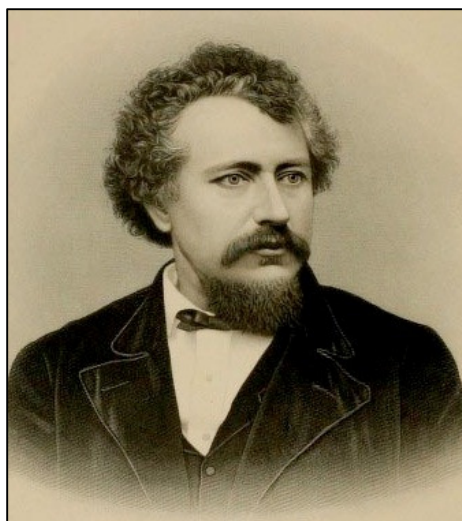
In the eastern part of the state along the Missouri River, the humid conditions, ample timber, and consistent water supplies made a wide range of commercial and industrial activities available to new settlers. But as the rails moved farther west, the flat open plains were best suited to two granger industries: farming and ranching. For the people who settled in the small railroad towns, farming and ranching drove the local economy. Stores and tradesmen working in the commercial districts could do very little without agriculture driving the economy. Without agriculture, the locals had no money, and no way of paying for the goods that came in on the rail.

## **LAND DEVELOPERS, SPECULATORS, AND GEORGE FRANCIS TRAIN**

Land and townsite development, even along a proposed railroad line, was speculative, particularly in the unsettled western part of the state. Nevertheless, developers usually encountered no lack of interest in speculating on proposed rail alignments. The disposal of federal land to the railroads through land grants, and the manipulation of the system by the UP and the B&MR certainly made independent speculation different; but along the mainlines of the smaller railroads that were not supported by land grants, speculation was a wide open field (Crowe 2014; Gates 1942). The value of land was often directly tied to the presence of a railroad. Land development companies that were truly independent of the railroad companies did everything they could to attract the attention of the railroad and make sure the lines passed through their land, applying whatever financial or political power was at their disposal. Sometimes railroad officials themselves speculated on lands, using their knowledge and influence to direct the rail alignments towards their own property (Olson and Naugle 1997; Gates 1942). Land speculation was a big business and every bank, developer, and railroad company was looking to get their part of it.

In eastern Nebraska, one of the most visible land speculators was George Francis Train. Train was a well-known businessman and orator who had travelled the world several times before settling into Omaha and getting involved with the UP (see Chapter III). During an extended visit

to France in the 1850s, Train had observed the financial structures used in that country for large infrastructure projects. Train adapted these European models to two organizations that helped develop the UP: the Credit Mobilier of America and the Credit Foncier. Train's involvement in the UP started before involvement in these two companies, however, working with UP's Thomas Durant to obtain control of the company and direct its efforts to complete the Transcontinental Railroad. With Grenville Dodge as the chief engineer, and Durant running the UP, Train served an equally important role in a less official capacity. After attending the UP groundbreaking in Omaha, Train went to Washington to lobby Congress on behalf of the UP. Well-known as a powerful orator, Train scored several victories in his lobbying efforts, doubling the size of the land grants, relaxing the repayment requirements, and extending the completion deadline.



George Frances Train.

Source: NeSHS 2009

After breaking ground in Omaha, the UP needed to find a way to actually fund construction of the railroad. Using his experiences in France as a template, Train established the two companies, the Credit Mobilier of America and the Credit Foncier, to meet that need. Not long after its creation, Train stepped away from the Credit Mobilier, turning his attention to his land development company, the Credit Foncier. Chartered in 1866, Foncier was a land development company, through which Train sought to develop properties along the UP and establish a real estate empire (Crowe 2014). In Omaha, Train acquired 400 lots known as the “Credit Foncier Subdivision,” also known as “Train Town” between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets. Train also purchased large portions of land in Columbus, which he hoped would become the state capital.

Using his oratory skills, Train attempted to promote the Foncier's land development enterprise by giving speeches at UP land excursions, writing “advertorials” that used exaggerated language to sing the praises of his properties, and enticing investors such as Cyrus McCormick (of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company). During the early years of Omaha and the UP expansion, Train's connections with the railroad helped him increase the value of his lands and

make rich profits from the Credit Foncier (Train 1902; Crowe 2014). However, as Train's influence in the UP decreased, the company turned instead to its own "Town Lots Division" rather than the Foncier, to sell off its land grants. In his final years, some of Train's bad business dealings, overreliance on credit, and some mental instability, would leave him in debt and fighting numerous legal battles to reclaim money owed to him from his land deals. Although Train himself never realized his goal of establishing an empire of towns along the UP, all Nebraska railroads and other land developers would complete what Train started, with towns spaced along every stretch of rail in the state (Crowe 2014).

## **STRATEGIES OF SETTLEMENT**

Although the strategies described above were generally applied by all of the major railroad companies in Nebraska, each company took different approaches to further its own interests. Because the overall goal of the UP was to extend to the West Coast, its growth across Nebraska was about westward expansion. While establishing townsites was a necessary step for paying the costs of construction, settlement was not the immediate goal. For the B&MR, which never extended beyond Kearney, settlement and local commerce was a primary goal, and a majority of its efforts went toward establishing and promoting on-line communities (as well as discouraging the development of competing communities). Nevertheless, both UP and B&MR had interests in promoting settlement in towns along their lines. Under the Pre-emption Act of 1841, federal land was available for purchase at \$1.25 per acre. Within the railroad grant lands, that cost was doubled to \$2.50 per acre. With passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, land was free provided you met some set requirements. Competing with these free and inexpensive land acts, the railroads needed to find ways of attracting settlers willing to pay higher rates for land along the railroad.

Railroads had little difficulty marketing their lands. The Homestead Act initially limited free public land to 160 acres per settler. This was a small amount in the arid western part of Nebraska, where limited water sources necessitated larger tracts of land for ranging cattle or growing crops. Settlement of larger tracts from railroad lands was also preferable to each railroad, providing a greater source for supplies and a means of marketing goods. The UP and B&MR promoted their lands by providing appealing credit plans that could dramatically lower the costs of land purchases by spreading payments over longer periods, at lower interest rates. Both the UP and the B&MR set up immigrant houses at stations along the line that served as temporary housing for new immigrants who needed time to get supplies and materials to settle on their land (Dick 1975; Olson and Naugle 1997).

The UP, looking for capital to fund its push across Nebraska, required one-quarter of the value of the desired land as a down payment, with the balance due in annual installments at 6 percent interest (Dick 1975). The cost of the land per acre varied depending on its location, but the average cost of Nebraska railroad land was \$4.27 per acre. Although this cost per acre was significantly more expensive than acquiring land through pre-emption or the Homestead Act, the

6 percent interest rate was significantly lower than what was available through private land deals, and overall the costs over time could be lower (Olson and Naugle 1997).

## Free Homesteads IN Western Nebraska

Every farmer who is tired of renting and wants a farm of his own, or who desires to put his sons on the road to independence, should investigate this proposition.

Successful farming on these lands requires that the farmer have ready money for immediate improvement in the way of fences and necessary buildings, and to provide himself with a herd of at least twenty dairy cows and a hand cream separator. The Nebraska dairy industry is one of the greatest in the world and affords a ready market at good prices for all cream produced.

Specially conducted excursions to these free lands will leave Omaha, Neb., on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. The Burlington's Homeseeker's Information Bureau has been organized to give homeseekers free information and assistance in locating.

Write to-day for a folder giving detailed information. Address D. OLSEN DEVER, Room 120, "Q" Bldg., 1604 Fairman St., Omaha, Neb.

Advertisement for land excursions on the B&MR (Burlington) Railroad.

Source: April 1906 issue of *American Swineherd*, a periodical serving the interest of hog farmers.

Unlike UP, the B&MR was not attempting to extend from coast to coast and was looking at the financial benefits of completing its line in Nebraska (accordingly, the parent Burlington Route's full name CB&Q did not end with "& Pacific"). This placed a greater emphasis for B&MR on land development and, to support this, the railroad developed an approach that was very enticing to new settlers. For properties on the B&MR, no down payment was required and for the first year only interest payments were required. This greatly reduced the amount of initial capital new settlers would need. By the beginning of the third year, one-ninth of the principal was due, with the remaining balance due in equal annual payments until the property was paid off. In 1871, the company made the deal even better, delaying any payment on the principal until the fifth year. Like the UP, the B&MR offered interest rates of 6 percent (half of the legal interest rate). The B&MR also took steps to support settlers, understanding that it was not just the land sales, but the traffic along their railroad from successful settlement that led to their profits. The B&MR established the Homeseeker's Information Bureau, which provided information for new settlers on how to locate, purchase, and settle on the land. During droughts or grasshopper blights the B&MR set up relief funds, and would sometimes renegotiate payments. Unlike some creditors,



the railroads stood a lot to lose if these settlements were not successful (Dick 1975). If relief efforts and negotiated payments were not enough to save a failing farm, the railroads would cancel the contracts, freeing up the land for resale. While the railroads wanted to keep the settlers on the land, they needed successful settlers to support the local economy.

Smaller railroads, lacking federal land grants, needed to acquire access to land through traditional land deals, acquiring easements and rights-of-way from private owners, and occasionally through state land grants. The Chicago & North Western, completing a trunk line to Niobrara in 1884, received 55,000 acres of land from the state. For lower-profile companies like C&NW expanding in Nebraska, developing land and attracting settlers became an essential means of getting returns on investments.



“Official Railway Map of Nebraska, 1915.” Nebraska reached its railroad-mileage peak of 7,879 miles in 1910, reflected fully on this 1915 state map, issued by the Nebraska State Railway Commission, Lincoln.

## ORGANIZATION OF RAILROAD TOWNS

John Hudson’s 1982 article “Towns of the Western Railroads” (*Great Plains Quarterly*) provided a detailed description of the philosophy behind the section’s townsite development and how it changed over time. The concept of platting a townsite in general was not universal across the United States. On the East Coast and in the South, communities developed organically based on traditional transportation routes such as rivers, trails, and wagon roads. As settlement of the nation moved into the Midwest, northern land developers, who provided much of the financial backing, supported the idea of formally platting towns, with gridded streets of fixed widths in



cardinal directions. These concepts continued as settlements were established along Nebraska's railroad lines.

Similar to town placement along the rail lines, which was intended to promote economic development, the repetitive layout of the townsites themselves had a similar goal. Town layouts attempted to maximize the amount of commercial property accessible along the rail line, while discouraging commercial development on land that was not under the rail company's control. Residential lots were typically 50 feet wide, while commercial lots were half that size. Major roads typically followed the commercial properties and were 80 to 100 feet wide, with 60-foot-wide streets along residential neighborhoods. These standards allowed anyone looking at the town plat to know immediately where the commercial districts were, and where the best properties (at the intersection of two major roads) would be located. In addition to commercial districts, properties immediately adjacent to the railroad were reserved for the depot and businesses that required direct access to railcars. In many towns, those "industrial" lots were underused and re-sold for public uses (Hudson 1982).

Hudson identified three different types of town layouts, used by railroads across the Midwest and West.

- The earliest type of layout was symmetrical, with commercial properties parallel to, and on either side of the railroad mainline. This method proved problematic in some towns, as each end of the commercial street divided by the rail line developed with very different businesses, resulting in one side having the main concentration of businesses and the "other side of the tracks" supporting seedy and unwelcome businesses. Towns like Sidney reflected this model and gained the reputation of having too many saloons and rough behavior, particularly on the south side of the tracks (Avery 2010:239).
- A second layout attempted to solve the above problems by building commercial districts perpendicular to the tracks, so that people only needed to cross the tracks in one location to access both commercial districts. Even under this arrangement, differential development was common. Juniata in Adams County is an example of this type of layout. The commercial district, roughly two blocks wide, runs perpendicular to the B&M tracks.
- The third method removed the railroad from the center of town entirely. This "T-town" layout placed the town on one side of the tracks with the town center on two perpendicular roads lined with commercial properties. This asymmetrical style of town design reflected what was already happening in older railroad towns back East, removing the railroad from the town center in favor of an undivided and centralized commercial district. Jefferson County on the southern border of Nebraska has several towns that reflected this layout. Long Pine on the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad,

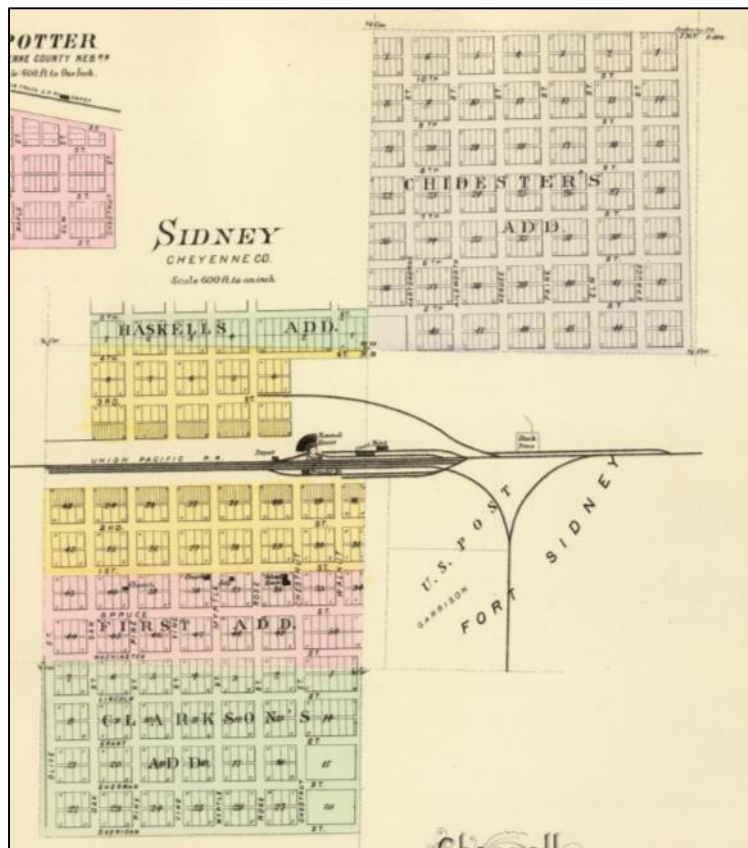
and Powell on the St. Joseph & Western Railroad, both featured an asymmetrical layout based around a commercial center isolated from the railroad.

## TOWN PROFILES

Three examples of railroad towns include Sidney, the last major stop on the UP in western Nebraska; Juniata, a small town on the B&MR outside of Hastings, in Adams County; and Long Pine, a small community on the Chicago & North Western line in Brown County.

### Sidney – Parallel Layout

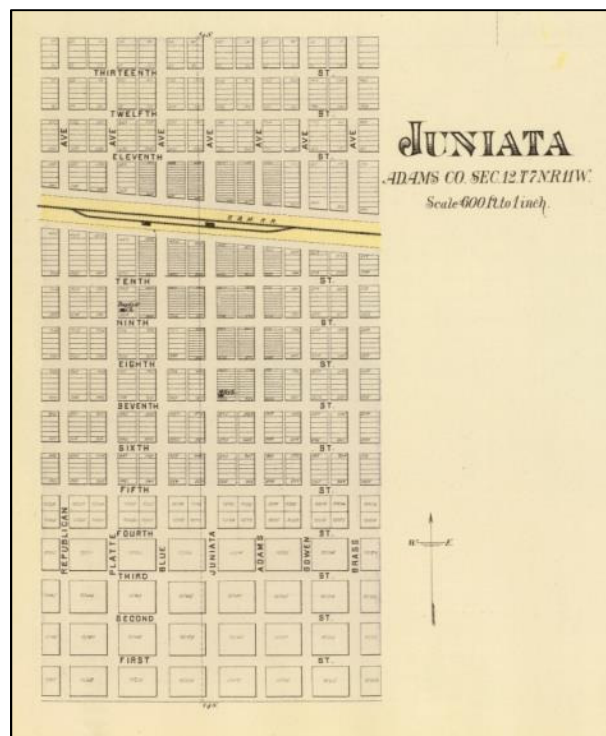
Sidney, the county seat of Cheyenne County, was founded in 1867 with the arrival of the UP as a temporary “end of the line” town. With practically no other communities in the area, and in order to protect railroad construction, the U.S. Army established Sidney Barracks, initially only a sub-post to Fort Sedgwick in Colorado but an independent fort by 1870 (Olson and Naugle 1997; Shumway 1921). The initial plat of the town had the commercial district parallel to the railroad with two separate commercial strips separated by the railroad. The railroad served as a boundary resulting in two very different types of businesses on either side of the tracks (Olson and Naugle 1997).



Like many of these “Hell on Wheels” communities, Sidney developed a reputation as a boisterous and unruly place filled with saloons, prostitution, and gambling. Along with railroad workers and railroad money, and with U.S. soldiers stationed nearby, businesses set up to serve their needs, and prey upon vices. At one time, 23 saloons stretched between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets west of Rose Street on the south side of the tracks. The strong concentration of saloons quickly died out as railroad construction moved farther west and Sidney developed as more of a cow town, yet a permanent town, along the UP Transcontinental line (Shumway 1921).

When the Black Hills gold rush saw its peak in the mid-1870s, Sidney, which was one of the closest communities accessible by the railroad, saw a brief return to its bawdy past. In addition to stores, merchants, and hotels, the town also saw a return to the saloons and prostitution it had hosted the decade before. The land development goals of the UP and their land companies to establish small and thriving businesses appeared to be successful in Sidney, and even as the Black Hills gold rush began to die down towards the end of the decade, Sidney retained a steady population (Shumway 1921; U.S. Census Bureau 2013).

### **Juniata – Perpendicular Layout**



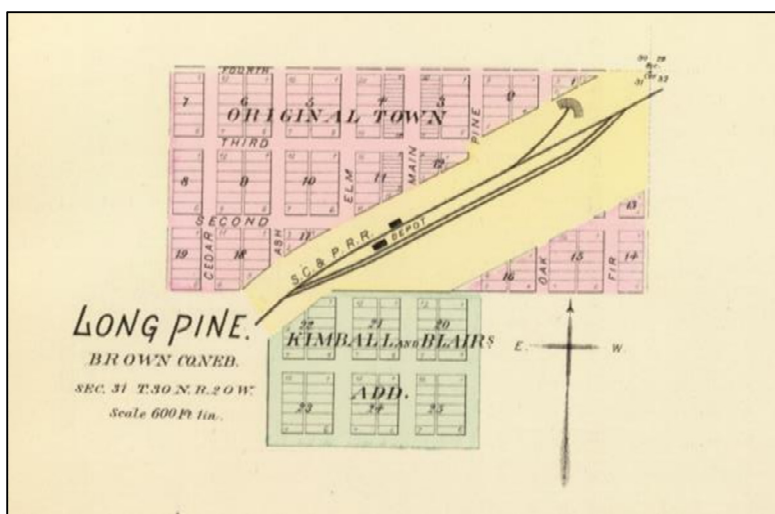
Juniata is a small community west of Hastings in Adams County, founded in 1871 as one of the alphabetically named towns platted—east to west—from Lincoln by the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad. Juniata was the first significant community established in the county, and was briefly the county seat before losing that distinction to the town of Hastings in 1878. Juniata exemplified the orthogonal layout as described by Hudson, with commercial properties running

perpendicular to the railroad in an effort to discourage the differential development on either side of the tracks that had plagued parallel layouts like Sidney.

The original Juniata townsite consisted of 360 acres established by four families who pre-empted the land in advance of the B&MR railroad, which arrived from Lincoln in June 1872. Not long after the Burlington arrived, businesses began moving into town, including a hotel, a livery, grain buyers, a meat market, and a pharmacy. Also in 1872, Juniata and its county commissioners refused to provide financial support for the St. Joseph & Denver City Railroad surveying its way into Adams County from the southeast. They assumed that their second rail connection would connect with the B&MR in well-established Juniata. Instead, after reaching Glenvil, the StJ&DC turned north and crossed the Burlington 7 miles to the east of Juniata, and established Hastings in proper alphabetical order, named for a StJ&DC grading contractor (Renschler 2014). As a result, by 1878 Hastings took over as the county seat and the development of Juniata slowed tremendously. The perpendicular layout of its commercial district was never fully realized with most of the commercial properties only on the south side of the tracks. The town remained a stop along the railroad, but never grew to be much larger than a small farming and ranching community along the B&MR.

### Long Pine – “T-town” Layout

The community of Long Pine existed before the railroad, settled in the 1870s by homesteaders drawn to the area by the large numbers of pine trees. A small steam-powered sawmill operated in the town, which first relied on freight-wagon routes for supplies and to sell marketable goods. In 1881, the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad extended its Elkhorn River line from Neligh northwest to Long Pine. (On the town plat below, the line is labeled Sioux City & Pacific, SC&P, once part of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha, the “Omaha Road”; all these lines had been absorbed into the Chicago & North Western, C&NW, by the early 1900s.)



The railroad established a new town site, Long Pine Station, 10 miles downstream from the original town (Sedgwick 1921). The layout, following a “T-town” orientation more common to later stations, Long Pine shows the effect the railroad had on existing communities, displacing the original town to one centered around the station. Long Pine served as a railroad division point and saw increased settlement and business from railroad activity, incorporating in 1884.

That same year the Chicago & Northwestern incorporated the railroad into its network and expanded the line still farther west. In the 1890s the economic conditions in Long Pine had greatly improved, serving as an important stop along the FE&MV, featuring hotels, an ice house, a roundhouse full of railroad employees, and a population of about 250 people (Schwieterman 2004).

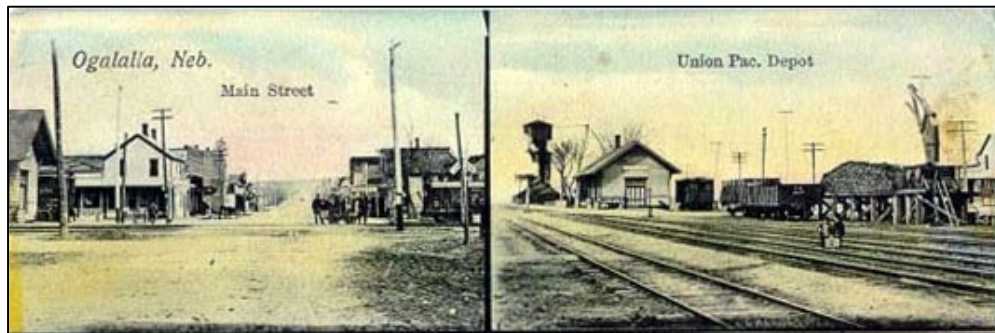
By the early twentieth century, the town’s economy became almost completely dependent on the operation of the railway. During World War I, the railroad employed 100 local workers, and hotels and restaurants bristled with activity from passenger trains traveling through town. By 1923, with active rail traffic and favorable agricultural conditions, the town’s population had increased to more than 1,200 people. The Great Depression ravaged the small town as plummeting crop and livestock prices bankrupted farmers. The C&NW thereafter decreased both passenger and freight service to the town (Schwieterman 2004).

The town saw a slight resurgence during World War II as increased demands for agricultural goods, and increased freight traffic, brought some economic relief to the region. After the war, the national decline in passenger and freight service brought an end to the brief wartime economic recovery. By the 1950s, passenger traffic through town was dramatically reduced, and the C&NW ended passenger service to Long Pine entirely by 1958. Throughout the 1960s, many businesses in town closed and what remained of the Chicago & North Western kept very few employees in town. Rail service through town limped through 1994, when the rail line (operated by the UP after absorbing the C&NW), was pulled up (Schwieterman 2004).

## **OTHER BENEFITS OF TOWN BUILDING**

In addition to providing land for town settlement and agricultural uses, railroads enabled a diversification in the types of industries present in the state. The U.S. cattle industry was centered in Texas prior to the construction of railroads in the West. The 1860s transfer of cattle to market was largely accomplished through overland cattle drives to railheads and processing centers, passing through ever-growing settlement areas in Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Illinois (Olson and Naugle 1997:187). In 1869, the UP encouraged Texas producers to drive their cattle up the Blue River trail to the town of Schuyler just east of Columbus where they were loaded onto rail cars and shipped east. But westward expansion of settlement south of the Platte in the Blue River Valley soon curtailed the cattle drives, as farmers protested the free movement across their lands. The cattle drive trail shifted west on the UP to Kearney in 1871 until similar

pressures forced it even farther west to Ogallala, where farming was less feasible in 1873 (Mahnken 1947; Olson and Naugle 1997:187–189).



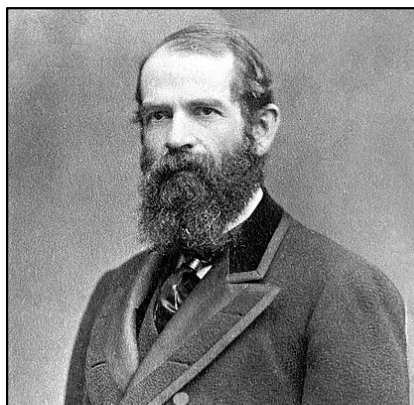
Union Pacific founded the town of Ogallala in 1866, and designated its station as the railroad's major cattle shipping point in the 1870s.

Source: Postcard, Google

## CHAPTER V: RAILROADS CRISSCROSS AGRICULTURAL NEBRASKA (1874–1897)

### EXIT TOM DURANT, ENTER JAY GOULD

The Panic of 1873 took the already strained Union Pacific into more precarious business territory, and effectively ruined Thomas Durant's personal fortune (he died in 1885). Amid allegations of fraud, embezzlement, and corruption, the company attempted to raise money with a stock offering to pay off its many liabilities. When markets stabilized in 1874, New York financier Jay Gould held the majority of UP shares (Klein 1987:307). Fortunately, and despite his reputation as a railroad Robber Baron, Gould offered the strong leadership that the company needed. Through a variety of bold moves he was able to settle many of the company's debts while increasing its share value (Klein 1987). It was apparent to Gould that new sources of business must be developed and that revenue had to come through existing passenger and freight opportunities, adding to those the signing of through-traffic agreements—across the new Missouri River bridge—with other railroads.



Jay Gould, 1836–1892.

Source: Library of Congress

Across Nebraska, many towns solicited competing railroads either to gain a rail line or, if a town already had one railroad, to increase the number of connecting lines (Klein 1987:371). Branch lines, alliances, and rate slashing became the tools of competition as companies expanding in Nebraska by the mid-1870s struggled for dominance and survival (Klein 1987:385). As head of the UP, Gould first claimed he was not inclined to construct many granger branchlines—that is, agricultural, and thus rural, seasonal, and low-density most of the year—in Nebraska because of low returns from freighting farm commodities and serving cash-poor customers. He instead sought quicker profits from building lines that tapped mineral regions beyond Nebraska in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and Wyoming, and the Black Hills of South Dakota (Klein 1987:358). Gould might also have been reluctant to invite organized demands from farmers and the growing number of small agricultural towns served mostly by his competitors in eastern and southern Nebraska.



## THE GRANGER MOVEMENT

Stabilization of financial markets after the Panic of 1873 also left national agricultural markets in a slump and farmers in widespread debt. In Nebraska, a “grasshopper-drought” double calamity accompanied the financial recession through 1877 (Olson 1955:183). Railroad historian Richard Barsness (2007:500) wrote that American farmers felt “convinced that much of their distress was due to the unchecked economic and political power of the railroads.” The advocacy organization National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry, popular after the Civil War, along with other fraternal and betterment groups including Freemasons, developed a national voice for agricultural families. “The Grange” amassed a membership of more than 850,000 “grangers,” including 20,000 in Nebraska, by 1875. Highly organized Grange members during this time influenced strong railroad-regulation laws in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, including establishment of state railroad commissions that set shipping rates, sustained competition among carriers, and curbed political favors for elected officials. When railroad companies and others challenged these states’ laws in the U.S. Supreme Court, the justices in 1877 overwhelmingly upheld the “Granger cases” and their populist favor to farmers (Barsness 2007:501).

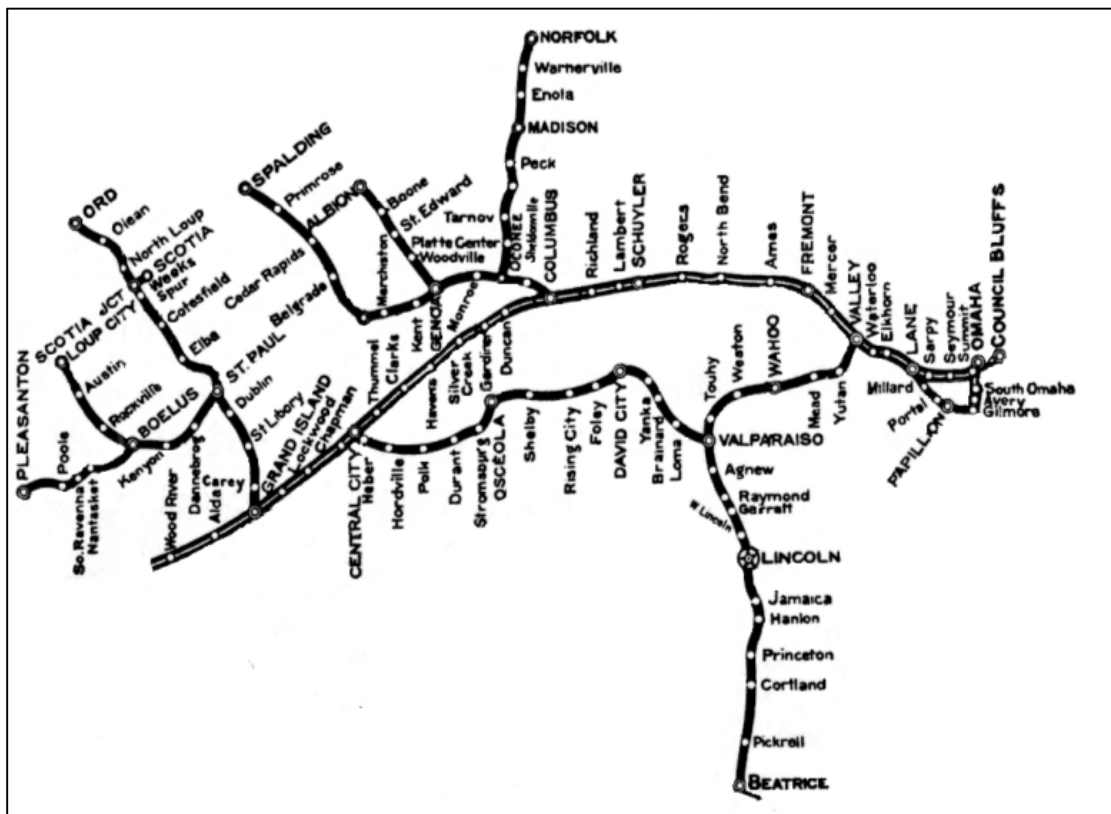
Nebraska Grange members found some relief with their own legislature in 1875 through the state’s new constitution. Influenced by the Granger Movement and perceptions of railroad complicity in corruption, and somewhat tempered by rail lobbyists, voters approved a document that imposed regulations on railroads reflecting those of Illinois and neighboring Midwestern states (Olson 1955:189–190). Jay Gould found the constitution “obnoxious” in its rate-setting and competition promoting provisions, explaining his resistance to building agricultural branch lines in the state (Klein 1987:358). The document, however, did not set up a state regulatory body to enforce restrictions on railroads, and did not halt state “internal improvement” land grants for railroad expansion. Meanwhile, the aggressive subsidiaries of larger systems—Burlington, Chicago & North Western, and Gould’s own **Missouri Pacific Railroad**—in the late 1870s continued to branch extensively across settled and unsettled Nebraska to exploit the state land grants and the granger markets seemingly discounted by the UP.

Railroads were not entirely or constantly at odds with farmers and their agricultural towns. The transportation companies needed productive customers, and maintained an official position that overlooked rate and political manipulation. “Products from farms and ranches were essential to the CB&Q,” noted the Burlington Route Historical Society (2014), “and the company became known as a ‘Granger Railroad.’”

Burlington representatives worked closely with farmers and ranchers, and as early as 1854 the railroad advised prospective settlers on what crops could be successfully raised.... Alfalfa was introduced by the railroad as a commercial crop in 1875. Crop and stock improvement, irrigation and soil conservation were aggressively promoted. Through seed and soil exhibits, poultry specials and livestock trains, the Burlington helped bring the most advanced agri-science

directly to the farmer. Burlington often would employ farmers at shop work during the winter months until they were able to establish their farms and attend to them on a full-time basis. (Burlington Route Historical Society 2014)

By 1876, Jay Gould admitted that construction of a series of branches off UP's Transcontinental mainline between Omaha and Grand Island would not only be subsidized with state lands but also would curtail rival activities primarily of the Burlington's many subsidiaries. He approved construction of the UP-controlled **Omaha & Republican Valley Railroad** beginning in 1876. The first branch of the O&RV left the main line about 33 miles west of Omaha at Valley, passing south through Lincoln and Beatrice in 1880 and into Kansas. The O&RV completed several other branches—some under other names initially—and extensions through 1886 (map below), continuing construction after Gould's departure in 1884 (UtahRails.net 2014). These branch lines probably paid for themselves with land sales and new granger business, but largely served Gould and his successors as bargaining chips in dealings with the ever-expanding Burlington Lines through the 1890s. And, significantly, Gould's and UP's first O&RV branch brought UP service to the state capital at Lincoln, served since 1870 by B&MR (Klein 1987:359).



Probably a c. 1915 ICC Valuation Records Map. Shown are the Union Pacific Railroad's early ventures into granger branch lines, serving the capital at Lincoln and farming communities north and south of the Transcontinental mainline. UP divested these lines, all operated as the Omaha & Republican Valley Railroad, in its 1892 financial troubles, but E.H. Harriman brought them back into the system in 1898.

Source: UtahRails.net

Gould sold his UP shares in 1882 for a reported \$10 million and went on to control major Eastern newspapers, the Western Union Telegraph Company, and Southwestern railroads spearheaded by his Missouri Pacific Railroad. Gould thereafter focused on the MP and his other Southwestern lines, and on his Denver rail connections with their Rocky Mountains mining bounty. Just before his death in 1892, Gould briefly regained control of the UP during the worldwide speculative frenzy that led to the international financial Panic of 1893. His son George Jay Gould occupied a director's chair at UP during the railroad's extended bankruptcy and receivership through 1897, and beyond into the Harriman Era (Klein 1989:13–14).



Union Pacific Railroad 1885 branchline depot in North Loup on the Grand Island–Ord branch about 1910. The fancier standard wooden mainline depot of the same period was reduced in embellishments and thus costs, resulting in a no-frills, no-eave-overhang building with faint Italianate Style influence through the strong vertical lines at windows and chimneys.

Source: Postcard, Google

## THE EIGHTIES: GOOD YEARS IN NEBRASKA

Jay Gould prospered by exiting a healthy UP during a decade when all of Nebraska prospered. “The Eighties were good years in Nebraska,” wrote historian James Olson (1955:203), “years of progress and prosperity unparalleled in the early history of the state.” Nebraska’s population more than doubled from 452,402 in 1880 to 1,058,910 in 1890, while farms almost doubled to 113,608 and land valuation more than tripled to a staggering \$512 million in 1890, where little value had existed 30 years earlier. Corn production dominated farm products, and the corn in turn fattened hogs and cattle that made their way by rail to Omaha packing plants, then into railroad refrigerator cars to eastern markets. Returning trains along the state’s many mainlines and branch lines brought draft horses and steam tractors, and new farm machinery from Chicago’s McCormick and Rock Island, Illinois, manufacturers including “sulky” wheeled and seated plows, harrows, seeders, cultivators, and harvesters of ever improving designs (Olson 1955:204, 207, 209).

Railroad mileage correspondingly increased almost threefold from 1,868 in 1880 to 5,144 in 1890, as more lands opened up through rail extensions, and Omaha hosted more carriers

connecting with and competing with UP (Olson 1955:204). The ¶ symbol in paragraphs below denotes separate extensions of the same company.

- The Burlington & Missouri River Railroad in 1880 completed its bridge at Plattsmouth, creating a direct Burlington route from Chicago through Lincoln to the Transcontinental at Kearney. Engineer George Morison's design placed two 400-foot-long Whipple through trusses on stone piers, and three 200-foot-long Pratt deck trusses, for a total bridge length of 1,400 feet (replaced in 1903, and paired with a new truss in 2013).
  - B&MR's **Burlington & South-Western Railroad** built a 2-mile connection from Falls City to Rulo in 1871, apparently qualifying for 20,000 acres in state land (Olson 1955:170). At Rulo, Burlington built another Morison bridge 1885–1889 (replaced in 1977), to bypass Lincoln and transcontinental traffic from Falls City to St. Joseph, Missouri (bridgehunter.com).



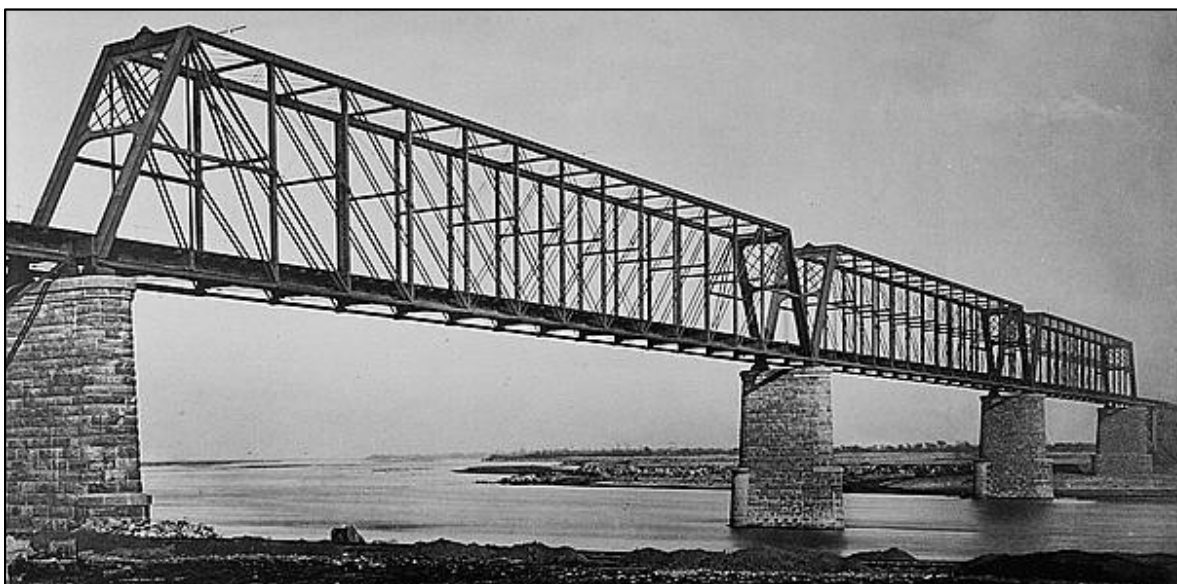
One picture worth a thousand words on railroads and townsite development, depicting the Burlington's Grand Island & Wyoming Central Railroad moving the Box Butte County courthouse from its previous location at Hemingford to the new county seat at Alliance. The move reportedly took 45 men 5 days to move the 40-foot-high building 19 miles (<http://alliancemainstreet.com/history/>).

Source: Postcard, Google

- The Burlington's **Grand Island & Wyoming Central Railroad** began construction in 1886 from Grand Island on a long and lonely drive toward Wyoming. The GI&WC and the Lincoln Land Company developed Alliance, Nebraska, in 1888, 320 miles and eight largely undeveloped counties to the west of Grand Island. With news of a new Black Hills, South Dakota, gold rush the

line diverted northwest in 1889 through Crawford and reached Deadwood, South Dakota, another 210 miles, in 1891. Continuing northwest, the line reached Newcastle, Wyoming, in 1893 and terminated at Billings, Montana, in 1894 (Nickerson 2014; Stover 1999:96).

- The **Lincoln & Black Hills Railroad** moved northwest in 1887 from the Burlington's station at Aurora with equal ambitions to tap South Dakota gold business. The Burlington subsidiary completed only 94 miles to terminate at Burwell, creating another granger branch (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:23).
- The Chicago & North Western, operating its Nebraska surrogates financed by Eastern capitalist John I. Blair, responded to rival system expansions in the 1880s with new granger lines in virtually all directions from Fremont and Norfolk. The C&NW took direct control from Blair of the **Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha—the Omaha Road**—in 1882, and in 1884 the Sioux City & Pacific and the **Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley**, both of which off and on had shared the same management. In 1883 the SC&P bridged the Missouri River at Blair with three 330-foot-long Whipple through trusses, and in 1888 at South Sioux City with three more Whipple through trusses, all designed by engineer George Morison (bridgehunter.com 2014).



Chicago & North Western completed its own Missouri River bridge into Nebraska via its Sioux City & Pacific subsidiary from California Junction, Iowa, in 1883 with this George Morison-designed span highlighted by three Whipple through trusses, each 330 feet long and resting on stone piers. C&NW replaced these spans in 1924 with three Parker through trusses, for a total bridge length of 1,335 feet (bridgehunter.com 2014).

Source: Historic American Engineering Record 2014

- The FE&MV—known as the Elkhorn Route and later in part as the Cowboy Line—began the decade by matching initiative with Gould's new UP-backed branch to Norfolk (see O&RV map above). ♪ In 1880 the FE&MV continued its



push northwest up the Elkhorn River past Norfolk to Neligh in Antelope County. In 1886 the Elkhorn Route, now more than 400 granger miles from Fremont, reached the Wyoming line and continued west toward Casper and Lander by 1907. ¶ At Chadron on the Wyoming extension, in 1886 the FE&MV branched north toward the Black Hills, gold mines, and homesteaded farms of South Dakota. ¶ FE&MV in 1880 started another branch from Norfolk north-northwest that reached Niobrara by 1882, then in 1902 continued into eastern South Dakota's prairie farms and ranches. ¶ FE&MV in 1886 built its own bridge across the Platte River and headed straight south from Fremont to Lincoln. ¶ In 1887 construction crews headed southeast from Fremont about 36 miles to Omaha, linking the FE&MV with C&NW's other affiliates Omaha Road and Cedar Rapids & Missouri. In Omaha the combined C&NW lines, through their **South Omaha Land Company**, carved a major stake in service to the growing meat packing and other industries of the state's largest city. ¶ The FE&MV also in 1887 finished a 120 mile branch southwest to Hastings, to participate in that town's beehive of railroad exchange traffic off UP's Transcontinental and south into Kansas and Colorado, and beyond. ¶ Finally, in 1888 the FE&MV finished another branch that ran 125 miles from Linwood, west of Fremont across the new Platte Bridge that launched the new Lincoln and Hastings branches, to Superior on the Kansas line. There the C&NW established lucrative through-freight connections with the east–west Burlington, and the southerly **Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad**, the latter having ventured approximately and only 1.2 miles into Nebraska from Strong City, Kansas, in 1887 (Grant 1996:49–57).



FE&MV (C&NW) standard combination depot in Stanton east of Fremont. These lofty barn-like buildings, with modest Italianate Style features of overhanging eaves with knee-brackets, accommodated passengers and freight on their first level, and the company's agent and family on the second floor. Housing for the local employee was common in new towns without adequate housing.

Source: Postcard, Google



- The CStPM&O “Omaha Road” was part of considerable C&NW’s operations in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and eventually South Dakota. The CStPM&P in 1881 and 1882 branched 47 miles off the C&NW’s Sioux City & Pacific at Emerson and connected with Fremont and its fellow C&NW Elkhorn Route. The Omaha Road completed a 43-mile granger branch off this line from Wayne to Bloomfield in 1890, and added parallel and similar-length granger branches to Crofton and Wynot in the early 1900s (Grant 1996:75).



CStPM&O (Omaha Road/C&NW) depot and grain elevator (middle left) in Wayne about 1915 (a likely date for The X Ray Incubator Co. sign for farmstead poultry hatching equipment) on the railroad’s line from South Sioux City to Fremont and the junction with its 1890 branch northwest to Bloomfield. The large wooden Italianate Style building was embellished with segmental-arched windows, a decorative truss in the gable end, and large knee-braces supporting the sheltering eaves.

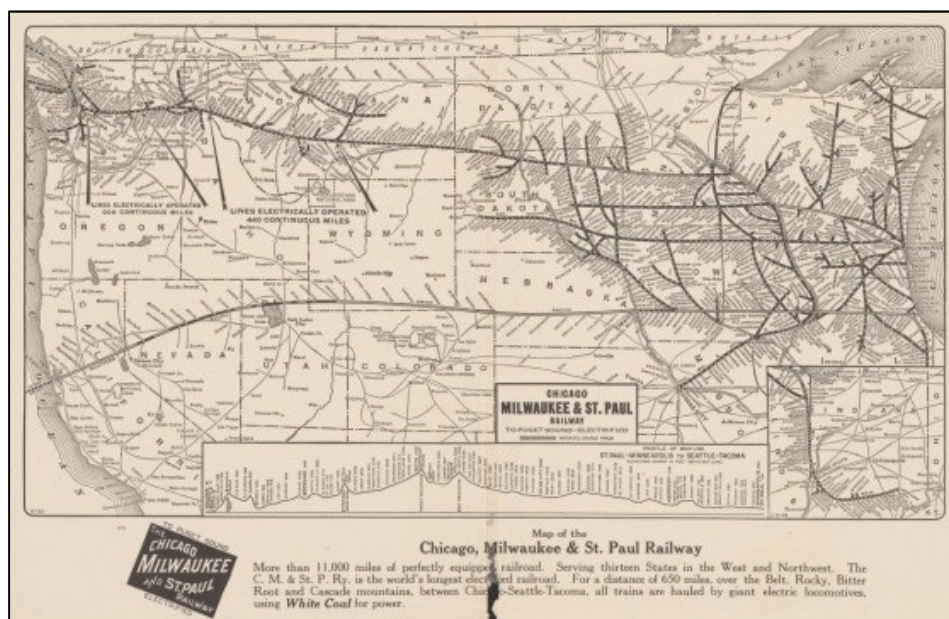
Source: Postcard, Google



Wabash 1883 timetable.

Source: <http://www.clements.umich.edu/exhibits/past/SummerParadise/wabash.jpg>

- The **Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Railway**, a Gould-owned Midwestern trunk line that connected Buffalo, Toledo, and Chicago with St. Louis and Kansas City, arrived from Missouri at Council Bluffs in 1880. Known simply as **Wabash** after 1889, the line contracted with UP for entry into Omaha's Union Station for its *Omaha Limited* and *City of St. Louis* passenger trains that ultimately connected to the famous Detroit-bound *Wabash Cannonball* at St. Louis (Johnson 2001:74).
- The **Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway**, advertised as simply **Milwaukee Road**, arrived at Council Bluffs from Chicago across Iowa in 1882. Because of its direct line to Chicago and friendly corporate relations, the Milwaukee Road served for decades as UP's favored forwarding line for its best passenger trains and fastest freight trains to connect the Transcontinental "Overland" mainline with Chicago.



Milwaukee Road map from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century timetable, showing Omaha as a major Pacific connection.

Source: [http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph251807/m1/1/med\\_res/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph251807/m1/1/med_res/)

- Jay Gould's **Missouri Pacific Railroad**, controlled by him since 1879, entered Nebraska in 1882 from Atchison, Kansas, through Falls City, and moved up the west side of the Missouri River. ¶ In 1886 MP extended west from Union through Weeping Water to Lincoln (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:61). ¶ Also in 1886 Gould moved north from Weeping Water to meet the new **Omaha Belt Railway**, a 15-mile line around the south and west outskirts of Omaha that first allowed MP entry to Omaha freight markets and passenger service from the Omaha Road's Webster Street station. ¶ In 1886 MP moved northwest from another Atchison, Kansas, branch through Hastings to terminate in 1887 at Prosser. ¶ In 1888 MP built a granger branch from Auburn through Talmage to Crete. ¶ In 1889 MP moved north through Plattsmouth into South Omaha (Kratville 2002:75).



The Missouri Pacific Railroad passenger train has pulled into Nebraska City's neat c. 1890 brick depot in Italianate Style with decorative gable-end trusses, bargeboards, and knee braces, while the horse-drawn trolley waits to carry railroad patrons to the town center.

Source: Postcard, Google Images

- The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, the "Rock Island," Grenville Dodge's first railway employer under its Mississippi & Missouri subsidiary, moved beyond its 1869 Council Bluffs connection and into southeastern Nebraska in 1886. The company's **Chicago, Kansas & Nebraska Railroad** built a granger line northwest from St. Joseph, Missouri, into Nebraska at DuBois, meandering west along several drainages and counties to Fairbury, where it crossed the St. Joseph & Denver City and continued west to Nelson. Without land grants, the construction was based on incentives such as Fairbury's \$5,000 bond issue to attract the line and its projected "Western Division" operations. ☞ When the company decided to continue west into Colorado, construction commenced from Fairbury in 1887, and the Jefferson County seat became a major office and maintenance-shop point on the growing Rock Island network. ☞ In 1890 the railroad built its own well-graded tangent from South Omaha to Lincoln, then paid for trackage rights over the UP south to Beatrice. It closed the gap between Beatrice and Fairbury through Jansen in 1893 and created a competitive high-speed Chicago–Colorado (serving both Denver and Colorado Springs) corridor. Rock Island ran the *Rocky Mountain Limited* on its 250 miles through Nebraska, and in the 1930s the *Rocky Mountain Rocket* between Colorado and Chicago, and in the 1940s the *Corn Belt Rocket* between Omaha and Chicago (Bartels & Reisdorff 2002a:67).





The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific reached Lincoln in 1890 and soon built this elaborate Gothic Revival Style brick depot, with 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor ogee-arched dormer, five blocks northeast of the capitol. The red sandstone building survives (in 2014) as a bank branch, complete with drive-in windows at the old ticket bay facing the long-gone tracks (at right; the drive in window at left was the public side of the depot).

Source: James Steely, 2009

## **REGULATION; ANOTHER BUST; ANOTHER RECOVERY**

The 1875 Nebraska constitution forbade creation of any new executive offices, one reason the state had not acted on the document's authority to regulate railroad rates and competition. But 10 years later the railroads' domination of virtually all aspects of transportation within the rapidly growing state stirred the familiar Grange unrest and activism. "It cost a Nebraska farmer a bushel of wheat to send another bushel to market," wrote Olson (1955:221) of the mid 1880s. "Local rates (short hauls) were particularly high, and in this the farmer saw a discrimination against himself in favor of the large, long-distance shipper." Under influence of a new and growing membership organization, the Farmers Alliance, in 1885 the legislature hobbled together Nebraska's first Railway Commission by directing its occupation with existing offices of attorney general, secretary of state, and state auditor (Olson 1955:224).

The Nebraska Railway Commission proved ineffective and regulatory reform moved to the national stage as the Wabash Railway sued the State of Illinois over rate regulation applied to corn shipped beyond the state. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1886 that only the federal government could regulate interstate commerce, and subsequently Congress passed the Act to Regulate Commerce of 1887, creating the President-appointed, five-member Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). But the ICC also suffered immediate suppression of its rate and competition regulations. Still, individual states were emboldened by the changing atmosphere against railroad monopoly practices, and in 1887 the Nebraska legislature established the Board of Transportation with stronger powers than its predecessor. In one significant Board ruling, that

the Missouri Pacific Railroad should allow the Farmers Alliance to erect its own grain elevator on the depot grounds at Elmwood, the Nebraska Supreme Court in 1890 ruled in favor of the order. The court thus allowed Cass County farmers, “local raisers of corn, wheat, oats, and other cereals,” to circumvent MP’s fixed prices at the town’s other two elevators (Justia 2014).

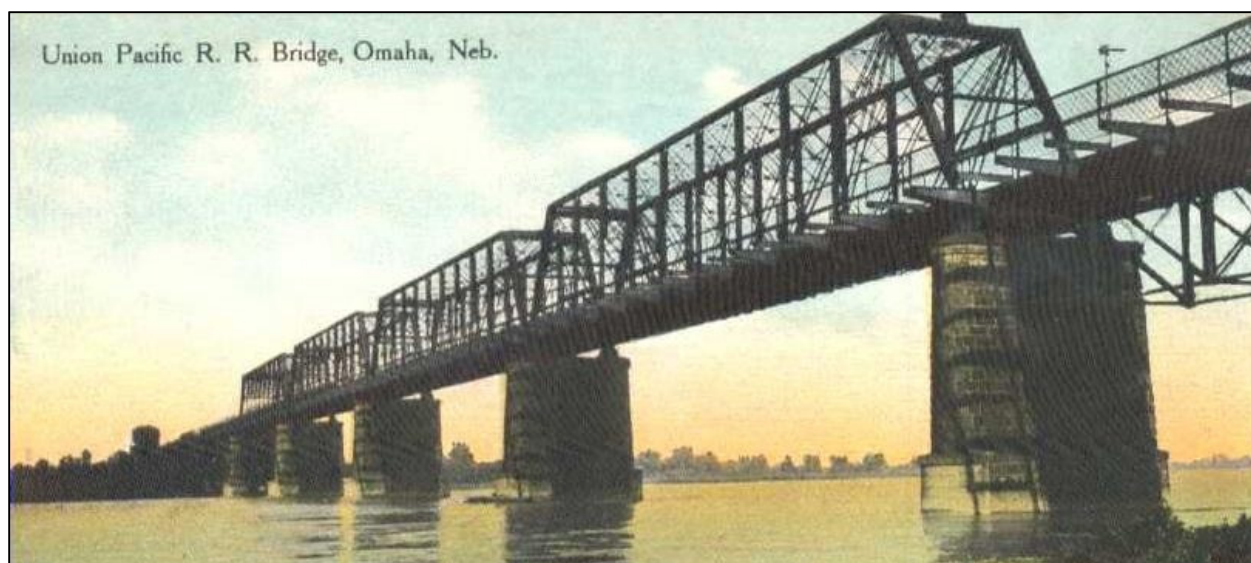


The Union Pacific Railroad erected a standard wood-frame mainline depot at Cozad, seen here about 1915 adjacent to the town’s grain elevator, in 1885 to demonstrate its friendly local service during a decade of prosperity...and dread of regulation. These understated but sturdy buildings featured modest Italianate Style details of vertical lines and windows, and wide eave overhangs with knee braces. UP’s small wooden depots, remarkably similar to those of rivals Burlington and Rock Island (Grant and Bohi 1978), were distinguished by squared (rather than angled) bay windows, and the particular way arched-wood paneling backed their gable-end decorative trusses.

Source: Postcard: Google

The Burlington in 1890 began construction at Havelock outside Lincoln on what would become its western lines’ major locomotive-building and car-repair shop complex (Kolp et al. 1983).

- Also in 1890, Burlington subsidiary **Nebraska & Western Railroad**—aka **Pacific Short Line**, “**Short Line**,” and **Sioux City & Ogden**—entered heretofore exclusive C&NW territory in the state’s northeastern counties. The N&W built tracks west from Covington/South Sioux City about 123 miles to O’Neill. The Burlington’s Pacific Townsite Company established the towns of Osmond, Plainview, and Orchard on the line (Grant 1996:53; Perkey 1982). ¶ The Pacific Short Line in 1890 planned its own Missouri River bridge into Sioux City, completed in 1896, but Burlington switched its service to the C&NW bridge in 1910 (replaced in 1981)(bridgehunter.com). ¶ N&W may have built or at least graded one branch off its line from Osmond about 17 miles north to Bloomfield in Knox County (U.S. Geological Survey 1898).



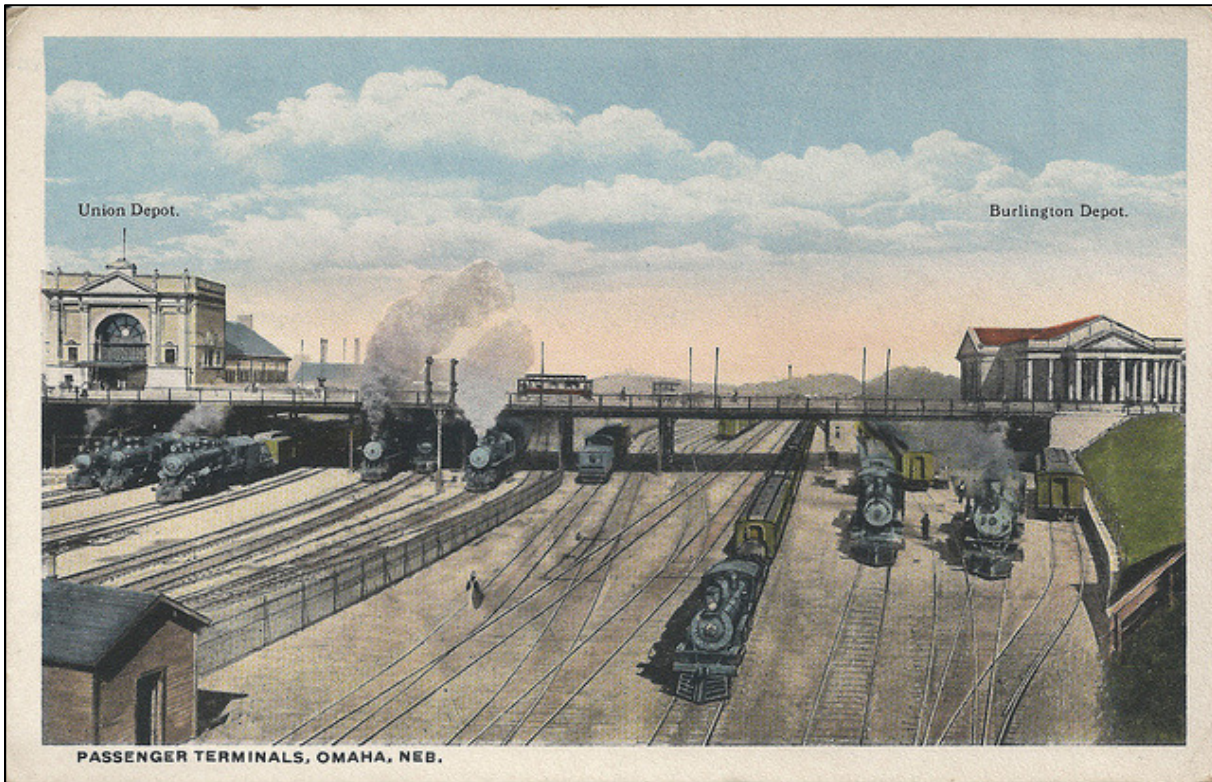
Union Pacific rebuilt its critical Missouri River bridge between Omaha and Council Bluffs, seen looking southeast from the Nebraska banks, in 1886–1888. The four new Whipple through-trusses, designed by engineer George Morison and supported by massive new stone piers, each took the place of two previous trusses (bridgehunter.com).

Source: Postcard, Historic American Engineering Record

Railroad expansions in Nebraska approached a saturation point by 1890, as farming prosperity and railroad profits settled into a delicate balance. Then a bumper corn crop that year lowered prices drastically, and the Farmers Alliance joined with labor unions to create the Populist political party, the state's fourth, counting Republicans, Democrats, and the Prohibitionists. The first election of the decade demonstrated the power and sustained dissatisfaction of the farming majority, as the Populists dominated the legislature, the first Democrat—James Edward Boyd—became governor, and a young Democrat dark-horse candidate, William Jennings Bryan of Lincoln, went to Congress. “Drought and low farm prices,” Olson explained the compounding disruptions, “combined in the early Nineties to increase agrarian unrest. Then in 1893, the country fell into the grip of a paralyzing, world-wide depression” (Olson 1955:235, 239).

The Union Pacific Railroad became one of Nebraska's first and largest victims of the economic collapse. The UP Company in 1893 entered receivership, meaning direction by a court-appointed manager who continued operations but enforced frugality. A grand new Union Station planned since 1889 for Omaha, for example, halted in early construction because of the bankruptcy and related financing problems (Johnson 2001:23–24). While the Gould family's Missouri Pacific, and Chicago-based C&NW, Burlington, and Rock Island avoided such calamity, most Nebraska improvements of rail lines, depots, and rolling stock halted between 1894 and 1897.



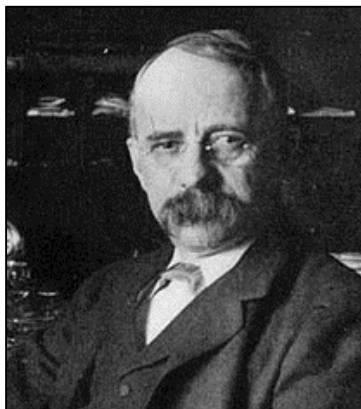


While Union Pacific in 1890 had envisioned a new Union Station for all Omaha railroads, its bankruptcy in 1893 halted the building's construction, and Burlington backed out of the deal (Johnson 2001:23–31). Recovering before the UP by 1897, the Burlington & Missouri River built its own Greek Revival Style station (at right, looking east in this c. 1900 view) designed by Omaha architect Thomas R. Kimball and opening in 1898 just in time for Omaha's grand world's fair, the Trans-Mississippi Exposition (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002b:43). When E.H. Harriman took over UP in 1897 (see Chapter VI), completing Omaha's Beaux-Arts Style Union Station became one of his first visible improvements, opening in 1899 (at left). While UP's through-trains east to Chicago joined the Chicago & North Western at Union Station, C&NW affiliate "Omaha Road" and Missouri Pacific operated passenger trains north and south out of Omaha from their 1887 Webster Street (at North 15<sup>th</sup> Street; not extant) Station (Federal Writers' Project 2005:219).

Source: Postcard, Google

## CHAPTER VI: HARRIMAN ERA THROUGH WORLD WAR I AND THE UNITED STATES RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION (1897–1920)

### ENTER EDWARD HENRY (E.H.) HARRIMAN



Edward Henry Harriman, 1848–1909, in 1899.

Source: Wikipedia Commons

E.H. Harriman learned the intricacies of the stock markets in his teens, and the workings of American railroads in his early 20s. But he moved relatively slowly up through railroad management to a director's seat on the Illinois Central Railroad in 1883 at age 35 (Hansen 2007:512). Helping to coax the IC into maturity as a major north-south railroad between Chicago and New Orleans, Harriman saw the IC successfully branch into other regions including another mainline from Chicago west across Iowa to Council Bluffs. There the IC joined the other transcontinental "bridge" railroads lining up to transfer goods and people to the Union Pacific and its literal bridge monopoly west into Omaha.

Harriman's first dealings with the UP probably revolved around IC's own desired entry to Omaha. Starting in 1899, IC used the 1893 **Omaha Bridge and Terminal Railway's** through-truss Missouri River swing bridge—just north of UP's 1872/1888 bridge—into the growing city with its lucrative granger and transcontinental connections (bridgehunter.com 2014).

When the UP moved to emerge from its 5-year receivership in 1897, Harriman assembled a group that gained control of the tired but viable transcontinental railroad for \$110 million. He ascended to chairman of UP's board in 1898 and embarked on a vast improvement campaign based on standardization of everything from track components to locomotive designs, from the now-familiar animal-skin/federal-shield logo in red, white, and blue to sturdy railroad depots. For depot designs, Harriman apparently favored Classical architectural touches—Greco-Roman entry columns and window treatments of temple shapes with pediments (exemplified by the 1899 Omaha Union Station), rather than strict temple-form buildings (as with the 1898 Omaha Burlington Depot)—on the Great Plains landscape.

[Harriman] was among the first to realize that a new era had arrived in railroading. The age of speculation was over: no longer would it be possible to make money from construction contracts or by playing one road against another [a rule he broke occasionally]....success would come from carrying high volumes of traffic for long hauls at lower rates. (Hansen 2007:512)



The Illinois Central Railroad entered Omaha from Council Bluffs in 1899 via this 1893 through-truss swing bridge on the Missouri River just north of the 1888 Union Pacific bridge. The 521-foot-long span includes the west rolled-iron section (at left) designed by engineers Waddell & Hedrick and built by the Phoenix Bridge Company for the Omaha Bridge & Terminal Railway Company. The OB&TR began in 1889 as a joint venture by Union Pacific—through its East Omaha Land Company—and the Burlington to develop industrial areas in Omaha and Council Bluffs; UP lost its equity in the company and the bridge in federal court in 1894. IC acquired the bridge through its subsidiary **Dubuque & Sioux City Railroad** in 1903. By 1908 the river shifted east and the IC converted the Iowa side to a second swing bridge (far right) built of steel by the American Bridge Company. The span is “held in reserve” but not in use today (2014) ([bridgehunter.com](http://bridgehunter.com); ICC Valuations).

Source: Postcard, Google

Gould before Harriman had bridged those two eras, gaining control of UP through speculation, but pointing the maturing railroad toward high volumes of bridge traffic on its vast and efficient corridor across Nebraska. To win just this type of business in the national economic recovery after the 1893 crash, according to biographer Peter Hansen (based on Maury Klein’s 2000 biography of E.H.H.), Harriman “straightened curves, reduced grades, laid heavier rail, and installed block signaling. The result was a railroad with more, heavier, and faster trains, capable of fulfilling the new operating vision” (Hansen 2007:512).





Although Harriman died at the throttle in 1909, he had probably approved plans for UP's new Central City depot, completed in 1910 of brick and stone with Classical Revival Style columns and cornice.

Source: Google Images

The infamous 1865 “oxbow” track inefficiency, which wandered 22 miles out of Omaha south then west then north and finally in the correct west direction, appeared on Harriman’s upgrade list by 1903, the year he moved from UP board chairman to UP president. Called the “Lane cutoff,” the new transcontinental-start west from Omaha required high trestles, enormous earth fills, and steel bridges over roads, creeks, and other railroads, but ultimately resulted in an easier 12-mile uphill grade to reach the Platte River Valley. In May 1908 the cutoff opened “on virtually the same route originally surveyed by Peter Dey more than forty years earlier” (Klein 1989:57).

The UP president in 1901 also realized an earlier vision, that of the original Pacific Railroad under one transcontinental management, by gaining control of the Southern Pacific Railroad including its original UP rival Central Pacific Railroad across the Salt Lake basin and the High Sierras. His system standardization thus extended from Omaha west to San Francisco, and from Los Angeles back east to New Orleans along much of the original Southern Transcontinental Railroad. Harriman thus accumulated numerous connecting granger, mining, and regional branches throughout the West, Southwest, and California (Klein 1989:122–124).

In 1906 Harriman’s UP and SP partners co-founded the **Pacific Fruit Express (PFE)** company to operate a fleet of 6,600 refrigerator cars speeding California produce east across the Overland Route to Chicago and Eastern U.S. markets. While Omaha meat-packer Armour & Company and other perishable shippers already operated ice-cooled refrigerator cars—and relied upon a transcontinental series of re-icing plants including Omaha, Grand Island, North Platte, and other


Nebraska stations—Harriman’s PFE elevated such service to unit-train status: an entire train devoted to one commodity on its own swift schedule. “The North Platte [ice] station,” Klein (1989:358–359) cited as an example of 1920s operations during peak fruit and vegetable shipments when PFE owned more than 40,000 cars, “iced an average of a thousand cars every day during one period in the fall of 1927.” The accommodating PFE icing platforms and huge adjacent ice-producing plants were inseparable from Nebraska’s transcontinental railroad culture between 1907 and invention of mechanical refrigerator cars, each with its own small engine and compressor, starting in the 1950s.

Harriman built highly efficient corridors with his transcontinental heritage of UP and SP, but he also wanted control of as many connecting markets as possible through those many branch lines. After Gould’s departure in 1882 and the UP’s struggle to hold onto its lucrative transcontinental corridor, the company had sold off its extensive system of Nebraska branches operated under its subsidiary and then independent Omaha & Republican Valley Railroad. In 1898 Harriman bought the 482 miles of O&RV branches back, thus re-introducing UP into highly local Nebraska granger services. In 1902 he personally acquired the former UP subsidiary St. Joseph & Grand Island Railroad, lost after the 1893 bankruptcy, placing it back in UP hands in 1906 (Klein 1989:71).

# McKEEN

## GASOLINE MOTOR CAR

BUILT AT OMAHA NEBRASKA,



70 Foot-200 H. P., All-Steel Gasoline Passenger Motor Car

**A WHOLE TRAIN IN ONE CAR**

**Powerful—Reliable—Economical** **96% Mechanical Efficiency**

¶ These cars have been in practical daily Revenue Service since 1905. Built for Steam Main Lines and Branches and Interurban Roads. One hundred and eighteen of the 55-ft. and 70-ft. McKeen Motor Cars are in service in the United States and one in Mexico. Forty-five railways are operating these cars or have ordered them. Sixteen roads have placed orders for additional equipment.

**WRITE FOR CATALOGUE AND FULL INFORMATION**

The McKeen Motor Car Company, a cooperative venture of Union Pacific Railroad and one of its Omaha Shop superintendents, William McKeen, designed and built a popular international line of self-contained rail vehicles. Manufacturing McKeen Cars employed many Omaha workers at the UP Shop between 1905 and 1917.

Source: <http://mckeencar.com>

The Omaha Shop, established in 1865 with the UP's Transcontinental supply base in the new town of Omaha, had grown into the railroad's largest locomotive and car repair facility, which Harriman modernized and expanded. By 1910 the shop complex on Omaha's north side (closed in 1988 and since 2003 the site of the city's Arena and Convention Center) grew to 210 acres and employed the largest workforce in the city. Within the shop complex starting in 1905, UP's motive power superintendent William R. McKeen Jr. leased space to assemble gasoline-powered motor cars of his design—following Harriman's general specifications—purchased by UP and many railroads nationwide and in Mexico and Australia (Klein 1989:296–298). The McKeen Motor Car offered a self-contained and economical vehicle with space for crew, mail–baggage–express, and passengers. It took the place of an entire passenger train on lines that did not justify the conventional expense. McKeen's company produced 152 of his motor cars through 1917, many serving on Harriman's re-acquired Nebraska branchlines (Kratville 2002:11–15).

E.H. Harriman's improvements of Nebraska's oldest and longest mainline railroad prepared the UP for a huge increase in business after 1900, by certain calculations as much as a 180 percent rise in “train density” between 1899 and 1909. Most of Harriman's major projects had been completed by 1903, although work on the Lane Cutoff “oxbow” replacement out of Omaha continued until completion in 1908. Double-tracking of the UP mainline plus automatic block signals—both modernizations allowing efficient movement of trains in both directions without danger of collisions—continued beyond Harriman's death (Klein 1989:67).

Chronicles of Harriman's UP years indicate that he lived in New York and maintained his desk in that city, but he visited UP operations in Omaha often. He traveled back and forth across his newly double-tracked Nebraska mainline on frequent inspection trips to view his \$160 million in UP improvements, and personally to locate new depot buildings starting with completion of the long delayed Omaha Union Station in 1899. Harriman died in 1909 at age 61 with his empire largely intact. But with anti-trust opposition to the SP and other Harriman consolidations from the Theodore Roosevelt administration, a Supreme Court decision in 1912 required UP to divest its SP stock (Klein 1989:65, 247). (The re-uniting in 1996 of Union Pacific and Southern Pacific under the UP shield fulfilled and vindicated Harriman's vision).

## **OTHER 1900–1910S NEBRASKA RAILROAD EXTENSIONS**

The decade of recovery after the 1890s financial and development slump increased Nebraska's railroad mileage from 5,685 in 1900 substantially to 7,879 in 1910 (Olson 1955:267). Railroads still dominated virtually all interstate and intercity transportation, and still sought to develop new communities and markets through competitive line extensions, some of fantastic lengths. Notably, in 1901 Minnesota railroad tycoon James J. Hill acquired all the Burlington interests and merged the old Nebraska affiliates officially with parent CB&Q between 1902 and 1904. Battling ferociously with Harriman over Pacific ports traffic, Hill eventually established another “transcontinental” line through Nebraska via Alliance and Grand Island, from the Pacific Coast and his Northern Pacific Railroad (Nickerson 2014).



- The Burlington's **Nebraska, Wyoming & Western Railroad** in 1899 moved north from the Chicago–Lincoln–Denver mainline on the South Platte River at Sterling, Colorado, into Nebraska's Cheyenne County to Sidney in 1900. After constructing an earthen grade separation over the UP's Transcontinental, the line moved north to found the town of Bridgeport, and spanned the North Platte River to connect with its Grand Island & Wyoming Central affiliate at Alliance later in 1900. ¶ From Bridgeport the same year, the **NW&W** moved up the north bank of the North Platte River and with the Lincoln Town Site Company founded farming towns Scottsbluff, Mitchell, Morrill, and Henry before moving into Wyoming in 1901. ¶ The Burlington later continued up the Platte and in 1914 linked at Wendover, Wyoming, with other Burlington lines building southeast from the Northern Pacific connection in Montana (Nickerson 2014).
- The Burlington in 1906 built a 103-mile Omaha bypass from its Omaha–Lincoln line at Ashland on the Platte River, north-northwest to Fremont, then continuing north to South Sioux City.
- The **Chicago Great Western Railway**, a granger road nicknamed The Corn Belt Route with direct connections to Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul, acquired a small Iowa system in 1901 that facilitated entry to Council Bluffs. In 1903 **CGW** completed its line for fast passenger connections with the UP at its Omaha Union Station, and joined the lucrative seasonal grain shipment business out of Nebraska. Receivership in 1908 led to control by J.P. Morgan and change in name to **CGW Railroad**. In addition to its UP passenger connections, CGW acquired McKeen gasoline motor cars from the Omaha Shop for services on its many Midwest branchlines (Kratville 2002:109; ICC 2014).
- Electric interurban railroads, running essentially heavy streetcars capable of high-speed express runs under electric wires on dedicated lines between towns, enhanced transportation options for and between the state's two largest cities. ¶ The **Omaha, Lincoln & Beatrice Railway** built only 2.5 miles within Lincoln in 1903, but survived as an industrial switching line. ¶ The **Nebraska Traction & Power Company**, later named the **Omaha & Lincoln Railway and Light Company**, built more than 50 miles of line in 1906 between downtown Omaha and the northeast edge of Lincoln. ¶ The **Omaha & Southern Railway** began in 1906 to connect Omaha downtown streets and its southern neighborhoods with Bellevue and Fort Crook, 8 miles south (Phillips 1949).
- The Harriman-era UP also saw granger opportunities along the North Platte River and built a branch beginning in 1907 opposite O'Fallon's Bluff, along the North Platte River's south bank. The UP reached Bridgeport in 1910 and moved northwest in 1911 to Gering, a town UP had founded in 1887 without rail connections (Nickerson 2014). ¶ In 1922 this line moved a few miles farther upstream to Lyman, and entered Wyoming to tap rich sugar beet farmlands just west of the state line (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:75).



Final reconstruction and double-tracking of Union Pacific's Missouri River bridge occurred in 1916, one of the last of E.H. Harriman's planned improvements, on the eve of U.S. entry into World War I. Four 250-foot-long pin-connected Parker through-trusses utilized the 1888 stone piers, flanked by 125-foot-long Pratt through-trusses and plate-girder approach spans.

Source: Postcard, HAER

- While many Harriman structural landmarks resulted from his 12 years of managing UP out of and far beyond its 1890s troubles, the most visible public monument was UP's 1912 headquarters building at 14<sup>th</sup> and Capitol Streets in downtown Omaha (Klein 1989:360–361). The 12-story Renaissance Revival Style skyscraper announced UP's progress and prosperity to Union Station passengers six blocks southeast. (UP vacated the building in 2004; it was demolished in 2008 [Union Pacific 2014].)

## **FURTHER REGULATION, WORLD WAR I, AND THE USRA**

Nebraska strengthened its own state railroad regulations in 1906 with a constitutional amendment that created the three-member State Railway Commission (Nebraska Public Service Commission 2014). The federal Interstate Commerce Commission, created in 1887 to regulate U.S. railroads at ever increasing levels, in 1913 ordered the major lines to inventory their properties and calculate their worth.

The Railroad Valuation Act of 1913, basis of the ICC order, culminated years of government attempts to regulate shipper rates based on the railroads' costs to build, operate, and maintain their properties and trains. "The carriers furnished maps, profiles, contracts, engineering reports, and other documents," explained valuation engineer Lynn Farrar (2007:1075) of the expansive documentation effort, creating a vast archive and snapshot of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century railroad culture between 1914 and completion of the base-line valuations in 1919. Those years unintentionally spanned the beginning of World War I in Europe through its end, a coincidence

that helped the railroads present their financial case to the federal government while documenting depreciation under unprecedented wartime loads (see ICC 2014).

Further in 1913, a private group mapping a patchwork of automobile roads and highways across the country named their ambitious route the “Lincoln Highway” to observe the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1915 of Abraham Lincoln’s death. As many as 160 miles of the route’s 450 miles across Nebraska utilized the generous land-grant widths of UP rights-of-way. The UP and most other railroads, in fact, supported the 20-year-old Good Roads Movement that inspired the Lincoln Highway, reasoning that horse-drawn wagons, even early automobiles and farm tractors, were short-distance vehicles that could use assistance reaching the nearest railroad depot (Slattery et al. 2007:3, 13, 17).



The Burlington depot in Nebraska City, built in 1912 at insistence of the community and probably by order of the State Railway Commission, hallmarked the era of James Hill ownership and balancing regulation with customer satisfaction. The relaxed Beaux-Art Style, combining hints of columns and pediments with earth-tone masonry and glazed terra cotta accents, also entered the railroad’s accounting books at full cost just as the ICC ordered nationwide valuations of such facilities.

Source: City of Nebraska City

Although the United States maintained official neutrality after the World War began in 1914, the nation’s industries increased production of machines, weapons, refined oil, and other commodities sold primarily to Britain and France. “The war thrust an additional burden upon the U.S. railroads,” wrote transportation scholar George Smerk (2007:1071–1072), “when they were virtually the intercity transportation system of the nation.” The “additional burden” referred to increasing railroad regulation under the ICC in the early 1900s, awkwardly misaligned with the nation’s tremendous population growth and its constant movement across and into the West.

With U.S. entry into the war in April 1917, the nation’s railroads additionally transported huge numbers of draftees, including Nebraska’s 57,526 armed-service inductees, via passenger trains

to training camps for the burgeoning Army and Navy. Nebraska war mobilization destinations focused on Camp [or Fort] Omaha in north Omaha and Fort Crook in Bellevue, both hosting an extensive Army balloon school, and the old cavalry post of Fort Robinson in Crawford, served by the far-flung northwestern Nebraska branches of the Burlington and C&NW (Swanson 2010:125; Olson 1955:278).

Several months following mobilization, carloads of materiel choked East Coast ports as Atlantic shipping faltered from German submarine attacks, and the railroads failed to return empty cars for new loadings across the nation's interior. The tremendous shortages of railcars combined with a declining railroad labor force attracted the impatient attention of President Woodrow Wilson and Congress. In early 1918 Wilson created the United States Railroad Administration (USRA) to coordinate the national rail system, while paying "rent" to the private companies based on their 1914–1917 incomes (Smerk 2007:1071).



Fort Robinson depot c. 1900 on the Chicago & North Western's Chadron, Nebraska–Casper, Wyoming, extension of subsidiary Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad's "Cowboy Line."

Source: <http://nebraskahistory.org/images/sites/fortrob/597.jpg>

USRA director general William McAdoo, Wilson's son-in-law and Treasury Secretary, divided the nation into seven regional districts, resulting in the majority of Nebraska served by District 6, the "Central Western Region," and placing the state's northern lines in District 5, the "Northwestern Region." McAdoo raised wages and shipping rates, and ordered nationally efficient routing of regional and transcontinental trains, leaning heavily on Omaha's connections and the UP Transcontinental corridor. The USRA also cancelled hundreds of redundant passenger train routes, affecting some Nebraska mainline and secondary mainline services (Davis 1999:461; Smerk 2007:1071–1072).

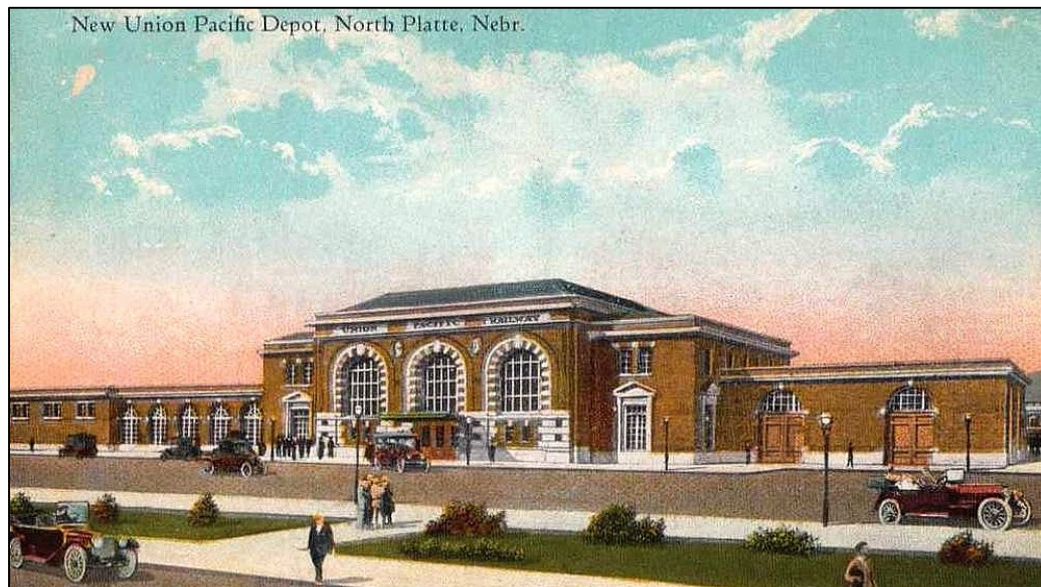
Expecting a 10-year war and taking cues from Harriman's earlier standardization successes, McAdoo's USRA designed and built a series of standard freight cars and locomotives, effectively creating the next generation of American railroad equipment. The war ended in late 1918 well ahead of McAdoo's calendar, which caught the ICC and President Wilson unprepared to return the railroads to business as usual. Receiving awkward appeals to lighten previous ICC regulation, and stumbling through labor unrest and strikes, the USRA handed back control to the private companies with the Transportation Act of 1920, cosponsored by U.S. Senator Albert Cummins of Iowa (Smerk 2007:1072). Fortunately, the wartime experiences of financial stability, routing efficiency, and standardized equipment helped the nation's railroads move into the 1920s in relatively good condition.



## CHAPTER VII: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II (1920–1945)

### GOOD ROADS TO POST-WORLD WAR I PROSPERITY

The same agrarian restlessness that earlier popularized the Grange and the Farmers Alliance in the state, resulted in “Good roads agitation” (Olson 1955:289), and resulted in the State-Aid Bridge Act of 1911. The state had registered little more than 1,000 automobiles in 1907, leaping to 15,000 in 1910. The 1911 legislation raised state funds to assist county vehicular bridge-building, and allowed county governments to sell bonds to build their roads connecting those bridges. After the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 committed assistance to emerging state programs—all essentially waiting until the war ended—Nebraska’s Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage was ready in 1920 to build a state highway system. As noted earlier, the state’s railroads generally supported good roads, and now welcomed the freight handling of bulk road materials and construction machinery (Olson 1955:267–268; Slattery et al. 2007).



Railroad depots constructed during the 1920s reflected a dutiful tension between the industry’s general prosperity and its obligations under considerable regulation. Union Pacific’s new Beaux-Arts Style station at the bustling North Platte terminal, while built in 1918 under USRA management, forecast the Roaring Twenties decade to come, with its well-lit waiting room for rail patrons...arriving by automobile.

Source: Postcard, Google

Nebraska citizens by 1920 moved past the Great War and national postwar debates over joining the League of Nations, and settled into growth patterns that reflected improvement more than expansion. “Nebraskans,” wrote Olson (1955:294–295), “generally joined the nation in a desire to forget Old World difficulties and get on with the enjoyment of the material benefits which the wonders of twentieth century technology were making available,” including telephones, radios, plumbing, and automobiles. In 1920 the state registered 205,000 automobiles, and Nebraska’s



rural majority enjoyed the freedom of mobility as much or more than urban dwellers in Omaha, Lincoln, Fremont, or Norfolk.

Nebraska's railroads responded to the end of the USRA in a similar pattern of improvement rather than expansion. Beginning in 1920 those lines formerly managed by USRA accepted payment for "rent" and depreciation during the war. Union Pacific received \$8 million after claiming \$13 million due from the government (Klein 1989:241). With similar payments after 1920, Nebraska's major railroads spent much of that cash on property upgrades and new rolling stock. Larger locomotives and freight cars, heavier rails to carry them, and signal systems to protect the trains appeared on mainlines across the state. Large railroads bought the new generation of "heavyweight" steel passenger, baggage, and Railway Post Office cars, while the Pullman Company built a huge interchange fleet of all-steel sleeping cars. Branchlines managed with downgraded small locomotives and older wooden cabooses, but delivered freight to the remotest county seat in the newest boxcars that rolled across the nation.

Grain shipments at that time traveled in boxcars, gathered by the thousands onto the Great Plains' railroads for the seasonal harvest, and outfitted with door cribbing that secured corn inside where boxes, crates, or automobiles had ridden during the previous shipment.



This post-World War I USRA-standardized steel boxcar, cropped closely against a post-World War I concrete grain elevator, illustrated the farmer's success when the annual harvest rolled off to market. Chicago Great Western Railway had entered Omaha in 1903 for passenger and freight interchange traffic; its boxcars joined the huge annual pool for grain shipments generally east out of Nebraska toward the Great Lakes.

Source: Farm Security Administration, Library of Congress

## AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION

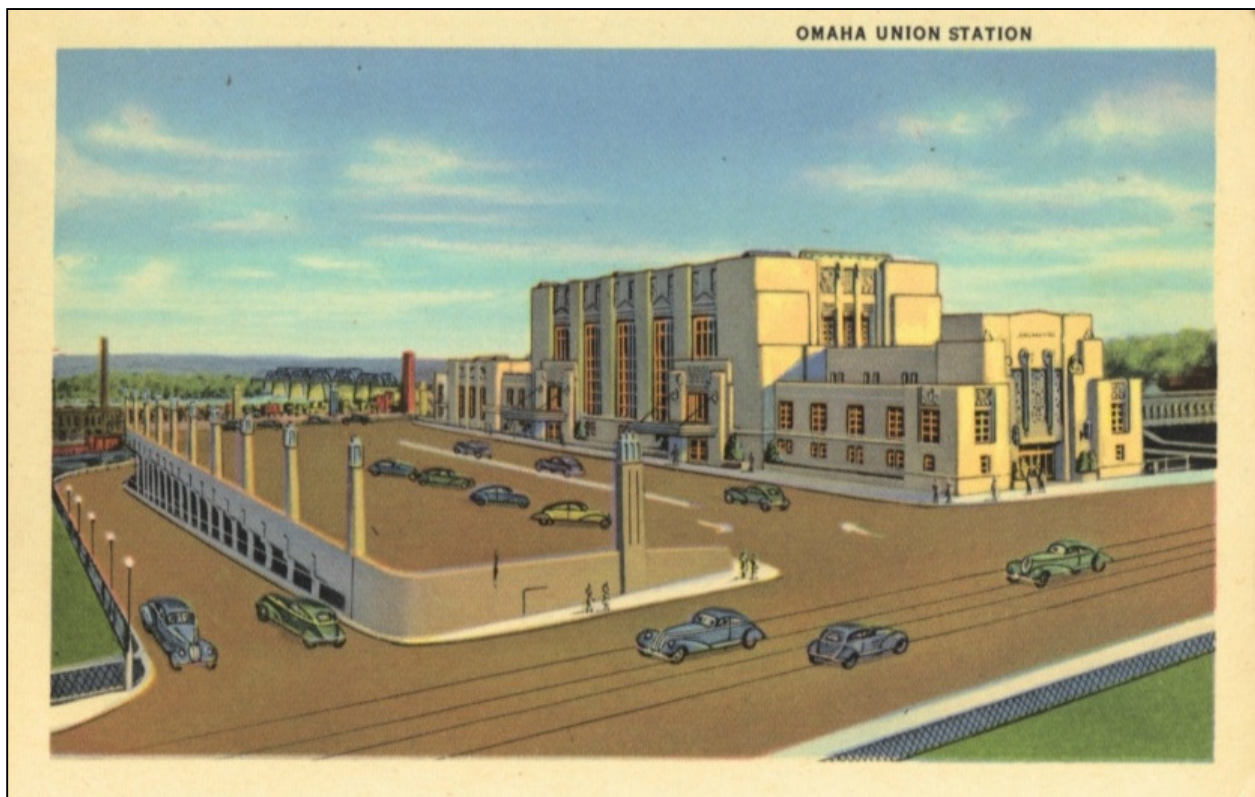
As with the USRA, generous federal support for wheat farming lingered into 1920 after the war that had ended abruptly in 1918. The United States initially supplied wheat and other famine relief for war ravaged Europe through this subsidized American productivity. “Then, in mid-1920,” Olson (1955:296) recorded, “foreign demand for agricultural products fell off sharply, and, in the case of wheat, government price guarantees expired. The effect was startling.” Wheat bushel prices fell to almost half their 1919 value, and corn to a third. The 1921 crops fell even farther, while in the same year Nebraska cattle went from \$9.53 per hundred pounds to \$6.13, and hogs plummeted from \$12.62 to \$7.52 per hundred pounds. Olson concluded that while material prosperity seemed to define the superficial 1920s for urbanized areas of the nation, the agricultural depression began in 1920. “These years so weakened the state’s economy that when the crash came in 1929, to be followed by drouth and deep depression in the early Thirties, the economy came closer to complete collapse than it had during the beginning years of the [18] Seventies and the bitter years of the [18] nineties” (Olson 1955:295–296).

Nebraska’s railroads, with their 1910 peak of 7,879 miles of track, remarkably clung to the state’s far-flung and sometimes redundant systems during the pervasive agricultural decline in the 1920s. The railroads hung on for several reasons: urban prosperity elsewhere lifted the larger companies, the nature of seasonal branchline harvests already placed those miles on operational economies, and regulation by the ICC and State Railway Commission required continued service, especially where communities depended solely on rail transportation. The major Nebraska freight-rail abandonment in the 1920s totaled 12 redundant Burlington miles at Yutan in 1927 on the Platte River south of Fremont. Even after that subtraction, Burlington still operated 2,870 miles in Nebraska, compared to UP’s sustained high of 1,358 miles (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:23,75). Two interurban railways—the 50-mile Nebraska Traction & Power connecting Omaha–Lincoln, and the 2.5-mile Omaha, Lincoln & Beatrice that never left Lincoln—ceased passenger business in 1926 and 1928 respectively (Phillips 1949).

## NEW OMAHA UNION STATION

In 1927 Omaha’s 1899 Union Station served 40 trains per day, the majority as transcontinental connections and through-traffic. Combined with the city’s enormous volume of freight business and trains, Omaha had become “one of the twelve largest railroad centers in the United States” (Johnson 2001:37–39). Yet, Nebraska’s post-war drop in rail business overall showed in Omaha’s passenger ticket sales, down by half from 754,000 in 1920 to 353,000 in 1926. Despite these statistics, Union Pacific and the city assembled sufficient optimism and financial resources to convene in 1927 about a new station. They first met with the Burlington—who operated its own station since 1898 across the UP mainline to the south—and then with some of UP’s own tenants: Rock Island, Wabash, Illinois Central, Chicago Great Western and Chicago & North Western. Burlington declined to abandon its own depot, but pledged to cooperate with UP and others on improved passenger-exchange facilities (Johnson 2001:39–40).

In 1928 Union Pacific hired architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood, already working with UP on National Park hotels and nine system depots including North Bend, Cozad, and Gering in Nebraska, to develop plans for the new Omaha Union Station. In February 1929, UP President Carl R. Gray submitted the plans and a budget of almost \$3.5 million to the railroad's finance committee in New York City. They approved the lofty two-story, 124,000-square-foot building with new waiting rooms, ticket windows, dining facilities, baggage handling, and offices, plus an elevated passageway to connect with the Burlington station across the mainline tracks. The cost also covered the station's new elevated automobile driving and parking plaza and related Omaha street viaducts over the tracks, more than 50,000 feet of new and relocated tracks, signals and interlocking 'Tower A' near the Missouri River bridge, utilities, and landscaping. Construction commenced in July 1929, and Burlington embarked over the next year on its own Omaha station's compatible remodeling (Johnson 2001:40, 45, 47).

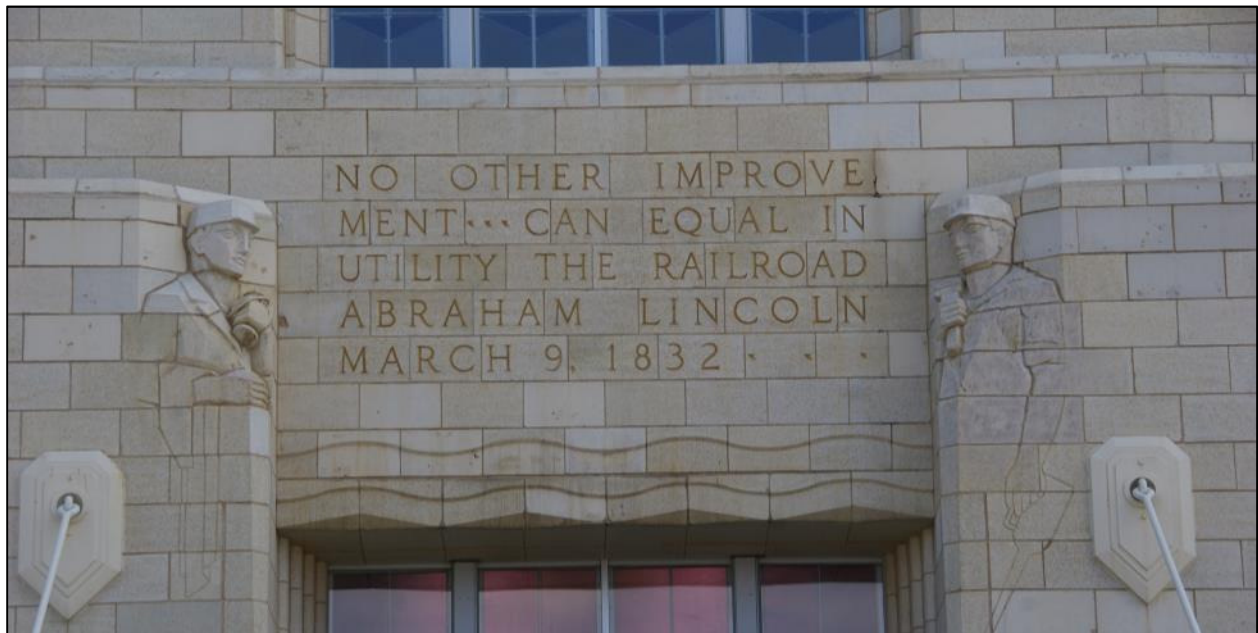


Omaha Union Station in Art Deco Style designed in 1928 by Los Angeles-based architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood, facing southeast. The new station's sweeping site plan and costs included the automobile plaza on its north entry, rebuilding the adjacent 10<sup>th</sup> Street viaduct (foreground), and elevated connection (at far right background) for passengers to the existing Burlington station to the south. The UP Railroad's Missouri River bridge is in the left background.

Source: Postcard, Google

## FINANCIAL DEPRESSION

In October 1929 the New York stock market crashed, and the financial imbalances of the 1920s quickly aligned as the Great Depression for virtually everyone in Nebraska and the nation. Farm prices, which had remained low throughout the decade, plunged 56 percent between 1929 and 1933 (Koster 1997:30). Nebraska's rural residents had registered at 68.7 percent of the population in 1920, and despite the nation's increasing shift to cities in the decade, Nebraska still recorded a vulnerable 64.7 percent rural population in 1930. The state had covered the deposits of its hundreds of rural banks since 1911, but after 629 banks failed during the 1920s—506 of those in 1928 and 1929—the state repealed its bank accounts Guaranty Fund in 1930 (Olson 1955:299). As the slump continued into 1930, Nebraska rainfall remained adequate and farmers continued to produce substantial crops. But in 1931 a new Great Plains drought cycle began. As both human-made and natural conditions “worsened suddenly and simultaneously,” Olson (1955:299) summed up, “virtual paralysis set in.”



Omaha Union Station details on its glazed terra cotta exterior, including inscribed quotes recommended by UP President Carl Gray to architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood (Johnson 2001:49). The \$3.5 million station opened in January 1931, served by UP and six tenant railroads.

Photograph: James Steely, 2009

Most Nebraska railroads, incredibly, weathered this latest economic storm. Union Pacific and Rock Island remained financially solvent and continued operating all their existing lines and services. These and four other railroads—Milwaukee, IC, Wabash, and MP—moved into the new Omaha Union Station in January 1931. The Burlington, operating more than 2,800 miles in the state, remained solvent but began to trim its overextended system. In increments of roughly 5, 10, and 18 miles, the company abandoned 82 miles on the ends of seven branches between

1930 and 1941. The longest cutback, 18.6 miles from Prague to Schuyler, implied a fatal drop in agricultural production for Saunders and Colfax Counties. But Schuyler was on the UP Transcontinental and still received more than adequate rail service (Burlington Route Historical Society 2014). Two major Nebraska roads slipped into receivership during the 1930s: the Missouri Pacific in 1933, followed by the Chicago & North Western in 1936.

The state's single remaining interurban railroad closed, following the fates of interurban lines across most of the country during the Great Depression. The Omaha & Southern Railway, operating inside Omaha and 8 miles south to Bellevue, shut down in 1931 (Phillips 1949). The state's surviving streetcar systems, Lincoln Traction Company, and Omaha Traction Company including service to Council Bluffs, survived pressures to convert to buses beyond World War II.

The 1920s and 1930s Depression hurt the railroads, and during the same years public support for good roads and highways also took an increasing toll on what had been an exclusive transportation relationship throughout Nebraska. The Lincoln Highway started in 1913 simply with route maps, then improved steadily with paved road segments. Eventually an all-weather highway stretched uninterrupted for thousands of miles, and joined similar endeavors in the 1920s for east–west and north–south highways. Federal aid to the state highway departments increased at the same time, and in 1926 Congress authorized and designated the U.S. Highway system. Lincoln Highway became U.S. 30 through Nebraska, paralleling the UP Transcontinental across the entire state. And the south–north Mexico-to-Canada Meridian Highway became U.S. 81, paralleled in Nebraska only by the 50-mile-long UP branch from Columbus to Norfolk (Slattery et al. 2007).

The next good-roads blow to the railroads came with federal relief programs to address unemployment during the Depression, beginning in 1931. That year the federal Bureau of Public Roads advanced matching funds to the states, to be paid back over several years. Nebraska's Department of Public Works initially received \$4.25 million, all spent on road construction in 1931–1932. After the 1933 inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, federal aid to road construction increased dramatically through Congressional appropriations, and the previous advances were forgiven (Koster 1997:34–37).

## **STREAMLINERS AND ADVANCED LOCOMOTIVES**

President Roosevelt's New Deal did not directly benefit healthy Western railroads beyond stabilizing the economic fall, particularly in farming, and providing jobs for thousands of individuals served by rail. But his administration rescued the U.S. financial system and that, in turn, benefited private companies by making capital-improvement loans available. In 1932, optimistic new Union Pacific chairman Averell Harriman (son of E.H.) and Burlington's new president Ralph Budd both decided they would try very hard to win long-distance passengers back from automobiles and other railroads, while reducing train costs. Financial backing in 1933 allowed both projects to proceed at their respective contract builders. Taking proven cues from



Omaha's McKeen cars and jazzy nods from modernistic steamship and automobile styling, UP unveiled its aluminum-skinned, gasoline-electric powered *M-10000* in February 1934, built by the Pullman Company of Chicago. The three-unit trainset with a Railway Post Office and seating capacity for 116 well-treated passengers—painted in bright waxed Armour yellow and Harbormist gray accents—zipped through Omaha on its inaugural run west across Nebraska, through Nevada to Los Angeles (Johnston et al. 2001:11–13).

In May that year, the Burlington unveiled its stainless-steel, diesel-electric powered *Pioneer Zephyr*, built by the Edward Budd Company of Philadelphia. Its three-unit trainset also carried a Railway Post Office and seating for 72 passengers in a big hurry. The *Zephyr's* first “non-stop” run from Chicago to Denver passed through Omaha and Lincoln with adequate advance notice and refueling time for plenty of publicity poses (Johnston et al. 2001:11–13).

**The Pioneer Zephyr**

FIRST STREAMLINE TRAIN IN AMERICA ESTABLISHED IN REGULAR SERVICE

Built of Stainless Steel  
Streamlined—Diesel Powered  
Air Conditioned  
Articulated Trucks  
NO EXTRA FARE

East and South		North and West	
7:30 am	Lv Lincoln	7:55 pm	Ar
8:25 am	Ar Omaha	7:00 pm	Lv
9:00 am	Lv Omaha	6:20 pm	Ar
9:14 am	Lv Council Bluffs	6:03 pm	Ar
11:34 am	Lv St. Joseph	3:53 pm	Lv
12:55 pm	Ar Kansas City	2:30 pm	Lv

Following the Pioneer Zephyr's sensational tours in mid-1934, that November the expanded four-unit trainset settled into Lincoln–Kansas City service, which it maintained for 26 years until 1960 with its retirement and donation to the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.

Source: Postcard, Wikipedia Commons

Both streamliners on these initial runs approached the U.S. land-speed record of 115 miles per hour. But both owners intended for these to be just the first wave of a revolution in rail travel. After UP took delivery of *M-10001* in October 1934, the 7-unit speeder topped 120 miles per hour “in western Nebraska” (Kratville 2002:37). “Picture yourself trackside at some rural



location,” dramatized rail journalist Bob Johnston of the revolution, “on the morning of May 26, 1934, the day of the Zephyr’s landmark nonstop run.”

Suddenly, off to the west, a boiling cloud of dust appears, surrounding a bouncing headlight beam. Within seconds a shining, silver streak like nothing you have ever seen rockets past at 109 MPH. The lack of a steam engine on the head end, its low-slung form, slanted nose, and shimmering silver skin are totally foreign. In seconds it’s gone from sight. But, you have just witnessed history in the making. (Johnston et al. 2001:15)

UP added more streamliner trainsets capable of more frequent streamlined service—creating its *City of Denver* and other *City of...* fleet between Chicago and Los Angeles, Portland, and more. UP forged a new partner east from Omaha with the bankrupt Chicago & North Western for these fastest UP transcontinental trains (Johnston et al. 2001:24). For all the excitement and success of its growing fleet of internal-combustion streamliners, UP remained for the time a committed steam-powered railroad for most other applications. In 1936 the railroad’s motive power engineer Otto Jabelmann and his Omaha Shop worked with the American Locomotive Company (ALCo) of Schenectady, New York, to fabricate the *Challenger* locomotives, huge 4-6-6-4 articulated engines, 122 feet long and hinged between their front 6 and back 6 driving wheels. A *Challenger* could haul 100 freight cars at 100 miles per hour across western Nebraska, and also pull passenger trains just as fast. In 1937 came Jabelmann and ALCo’s *Northern* class, robust but less complicated 4-8-4 engines, capable of moving freight and passenger assignments up to 120 miles per hour across the state and UP system. By 1944 UP bought from ALCo 105 *Challengers* (No. 3985 is preserved and operational in 2014; No. 3977 is displayed at North Platte’s Cody Park) and 45 *Northerns* (the last one built, No. 844, remains operational in 2014) (Klein 1989:374–377, 395).

## DEFENDING THE HOME FRONT IN WORLD WAR II

In 1940 the new war in Europe placed the United States on a national alert that far surpassed defense preparations between 1914 and 1917. The country and Nebraska were emerging from the Great Depression as well, and employment, production, and health of the railroads improved accordingly (see Olson 1955:334–339). Under the Transportation Act of 1940, the ICC compiled railroad data for various federal loan and regulatory programs, amounting in some cases to an update of the 1914–1919 Valuation records, and obviously in anticipation of railroad involvement in another war (Pfeiffer 2001).

National defense legislation in 1940, culminating in Roosevelt’s late December “fireside chat” radio broadcast describing the country’s role as “the great arsenal of democracy,” provided incentives for private industries to join the preparations. Union Pacific’s Otto Jabelmann and ALCo took advantage of the defense inducements and developed their biggest locomotive yet, the 4-8-8-4 *Big Boy*, of which 25 were delivered between 1941 and 1944. Weighing 600 tons

with coal and water tender, and stretching 133 feet—far longer than any turntable or roundhouse in Nebraska—*Big Boys* developed 6,290 horsepower to carry 100-car trains unassisted over Grenville Dodge’s Sherman Hill, and initially between Green River, Wyoming, and Ogden, Utah. (The *Big Boys*’ range lengthened in 1950 east as far as North Platte, Nebraska, where UP installed a longer turntable to face the locomotives for runs back to the west, and south to Denver. *Big Boy* No. 4023 is a static display in Omaha’s Kenefick Park [Wrinn 2014:7, 58–59].) More important and ultimately prophetic for the railroad industry, in 1940 UP also ordered 15 diesel-electric switch engines and assigned some of them to replace small steam locomotives in yard and industrial work around Omaha (Klein 1989:400–401; Hollingsworth 1984:126–127).

Other Congressional defense action in 1940 generated the nation’s first peacetime conscription, and opened training bases coast to coast for the 800,000 men initially drafted into the armed services. To transport these new troops, plus National Guard groups and regular Army units for long distances, the Army’s Quartermaster General that summer forged agreements with the nation’s railroads to coordinate troop trains (Watt 2007:1121). In Nebraska, Fort Omaha once again mustered National Guard units from across the state, and Fort Robinson again provided strategic isolation, this time for training military dogs, K-9s in Army wit, and ultimately for interning German prisoners of war. In addition, the burgeoning Army Air Corps “found that the broad prairies and sunny skies of Nebraska provided excellent training facilities,” according to Olson (1955:335), and built air bases near 10 small towns plus Lincoln and Bellevue/Old Fort Crook, the latter with an adjacent Martin Bomber Plant, all with essential rail spurs from the major railroads for materiel and troops.

When the U.S. entered the war in December 1941, new *Big Boys* continued to arrive in Omaha from Schenectady for final preparations before their mountain assignments, which now included moving troop trains quickly along UP’s Transcontinental mainline. By mid-1942 four major defense plants were under construction near Sidney, Grand Island, Mead, and Hastings. The Hastings Naval Ammunition Depot, in the center of the nation about 1,300 miles from each coast, enjoyed service from multiple rail lines north-south-east-west. The plant produced bombs, mines, rockets, cannon shells, and ultimately an astonishing 40 percent of the Navy’s wartime ammunition (nebraskastudies.org 2014).

- The **U.S. Navy** built its own 110-mile railroad inside the Hastings ammunition depot to interchange with Burlington, C&NW, MP, and UP branches (Grant 1996:174).
- The **U.S. Army** built similar but smaller railroads inside the 𐀀 Sioux Army Depot (51 miles of track) near Sidney, 𐀀 Cornhusker Army Ammunition Plant (32 miles of track) near Grand Island, and 𐀀 Nebraska Ordnance Plant (about 5 miles of track) near Mead (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:14–15).

The C&NW connection at the Hastings Naval Ammunition Depot was short-lived. The ICC had granted permission in 1941, prior to announcement of the ammunition plant, to abandon the 103-

mile former FE&MV branch from Linwood (near Fremont) to Hastings. C&NW initially enjoyed some of the Navy depot business, but in 1943 the still-bankrupt railroad gladly gave up the rails and other scrap, and retired its daily mixed train on the 1887 Hastings line (Grant 1996:174). Burlington also during the war trimmed another seven relatively short track segments across the state, in addition to those miles it abandoned during the Depression. The longest was 24.07 miles connecting Rockford, east of Beatrice in Gage County, with Tecumseh in Johnson County, the latter retaining rail service from Burlington's Falls City–Lincoln line.

The federal government and the private railroads avoided the frustrating experience of USRA management in World War I, through the December 1941 creation of the Office of Defense Transportation. The ODT “exercised broad power over all surface transport within the country,” wrote William Watt (2007:1121), but allowed the railroads to remain private. In addition to ODT regulation, the federal War Production Board allowed certain railroads to purchase certain new locomotives during the war, such as UP's *Big Boys* and *Northerns*. But their rolling stock—freight and passenger cars and cabooses—generally relied on existing equipment constantly repaired and sent quickly back to service. The UP Omaha Shop force was well-practiced in repairs and had kept UP's freight car fleet running during the 1930s Depression. Likewise the Burlington's Havelock Shops, once builders of moderate-size locomotives for the system, focused on car repairs in the 1930s. Both Nebraska railway shop forces continued these familiar tasks throughout World War II (Kolp et al. 1983). The resulting labor demands amid the military draft and higher pay of faraway industries placed a tremendous strain on the railroads, leading to unprecedented entry of women into the mechanical forces, import of Mexican nationals for track labor, and call-back of retirees in all departments (Klein 1989:414–415; Watt 2007:1124).

At North Platte where UP serviced locomotives and organized trains from the Overland Route and Colorado, local citizens met a wartime troop train on Christmas day 1941 and provided refreshments and friendship for soldiers on their long way to training and combat. Within months the North Platte Canteen served thousands of servicemen and women each day during their 10- to 15-minute troop-train stops alongside the North Platte depot. Omaha Union Station also operated a canteen including showers and bedding for longer stopovers (Klein 1989:415). When the war ended four years later, 120,000 Nebraskans had served in uniform around the world. And when the final troop train departed North Platte on April 1, 1946, the Canteen had served 6,000,000 soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen during the conflict through its demobilization (Steinbeck 2008).



The North Platte, Nebraska, “canteen” provided a much-appreciated refreshment stop for World War II troop trains passing through the former Hell on Wheels town on the Union Pacific Transcontinental mainline. Between December 1941 and April 1946, volunteers from North Platte and dozens of surrounding communities met the brief train stops and provided food, cigarettes, and support for some 6 million service men and women.

Source: NeSHS 2000

The steady profits of wartime business paid for UP’s new locomotives and the industry’s rising labor costs, and brought the Chicago & North Western out of receivership in 1944. U.S. railroads between 1941 and 1945 carried 25 percent more passengers than in World War I, including 97 percent of domestic troop movements, and 50 percent more freight over 1918 records (Middleton 2007:17). All Nebraska lines benefitted from the frenzy, particularly those serving the four ordinance plants, and other lines forwarding traffic east to Chicago and the East Coast. The UP’s double-track Transcontinental mainline, re-built by Harriman and further upgraded in the 1920s, served as one of the nation’s primary corridors from Eastern factories to West Coast ports. By the end of the war in September 1945, the conflict through its mobilization and production had “triggered an economic boom in the West,” wrote UP historian Klein (1989:415), “that transformed the region from a backward outback into a national trend-setter.”

Indeed, “the war years,” confirmed Olson (1955:334) for Nebraska’s railroads and their customers, “were characterized by unprecedented prosperity, both on the farms and in the towns, as heavy yields and high prices strengthened the state’s agricultural economy.”

Primarily an agricultural state...Nebraska's basic contribution during World War II, as in World War I, was the production of food, and the account of the contribution adds another chapter to the story of Nebraska's basic economic activity, agriculture. Unlike so many of the earlier chapters, this one can be captioned "prosperity." (Olson 1955:335)

## CHAPTER VIII: POST-WAR TECHNOLOGY AND LABOR CHANGES (1946–1979)

### POST-WORLD WAR II STRUGGLES FOR THE RAILROADS

The streamliner revolution of the 1930s, emboldening mainline operations with many new trainsets added until the war began and stopped new equipment orders, resumed in 1946 under optimistic company presidents and boards. Union Pacific's president George Ashby, continuing the company's sustained obsession to compete for high-speed Chicago–West Coast passengers, in 1946 ordered 180 new cars for its *City* fleet and by 1947 began daily service on its Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Portland routes (Klein 1989:486–487). Ashby also coordinated with the Wabash for their *City of St. Louis* streamliner. Chicago & North Western handled all the UP streamliners between Omaha and Chicago; Southern Pacific took the *City of San Francisco* west from Ogden, Utah. Burlington's president Ralph Budd upgraded its *Zephyr* fleet from Chicago through Omaha and Lincoln, including the *Nebraska Zephyr* and its counterpart *Ak-Sar-Ben Zephyr* when running eastbound. Burlington in 1949 added the *California Zephyr* with signature vista-dome cars all the way to Oakland through existing deals with the Western Pacific. Rock Island promoted its existing *Rocky Mountain Rocket* through Omaha, Lincoln, and Fairbury, and in 1947 added the *Corn Belt Rocket* for exclusive Omaha–Chicago business. The Milwaukee Road inaugurated its competitive *Midwest Hiawatha* between Omaha and Chicago, with a connecting link to Sioux Falls, Iowa. Missouri Pacific streamlined its *Missouri River Eagle* for Omaha–St. Louis patronage (Johnston et al. 2001:118–125; Johnson 2001:74).



Combined Wabash and Union Pacific Railroad's *City of St. Louis* justified a post-World War II streamliner for service with style and competitive speed to MP's *Missouri River Eagle* between Cheyenne and St. Louis.  
Source: Postcard, Google



The World War II economy had strongly supported the railroads, and most companies expected business to remain strong after the sustained emergency. “For a few years after the end of World War II,” wrote engineering historian William Middleton (2007:884), “there was considerable optimism about the future of the railroad passenger business and the Pullman Co.” But increasing competition for both passenger and freight traffic across the growing national highway system, and a steady rise in airline services for long distance travel and mail, had an inevitable impact on the prosperity of the railroads (Keeler 1983; Evanson 2006). Following the 1956 Federal Highway Act, work began on Interstate Highway 80 following the alignment across Nebraska of the UP’s Transcontinental line. Interstate Highway 80 construction continued into the 1960s, but almost immediately upon completion of each segment, the increase in automobile and truck traffic along this and connecting highways brought them in direct competition with all of Nebraska’s east–west railroads (Rich 1986).

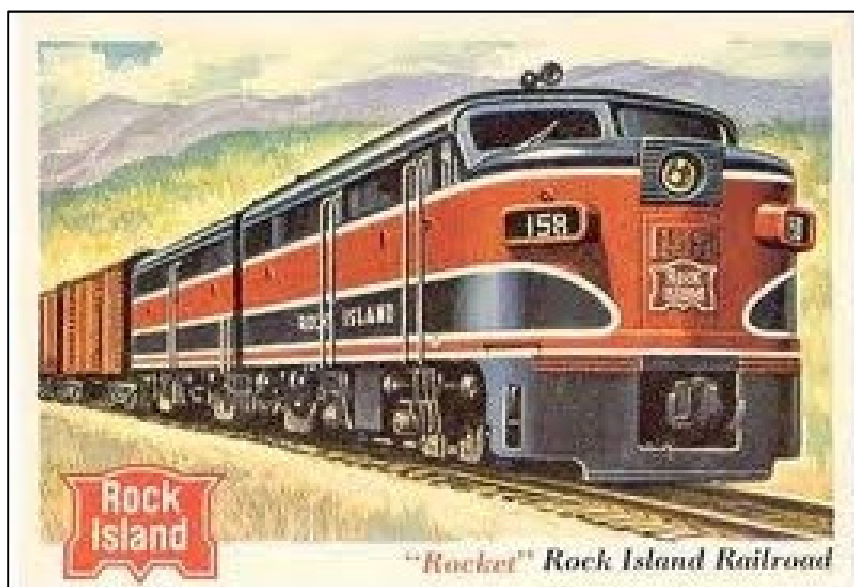
C&NW ended passenger service to remote Chadron in 1958, but continued freight service to Dawes County and others to the east along the Cowboy Line. Burlington abandoned another group of four branchline connections during the 1950s, the longest ending 16.7 miles of service in 1955 between Hildreth and Holdrege, the latter still served by rail in three directions.

Loss in the 1950s of rail passenger service to small towns along the branchlines was felt most strongly, and many railroads concluded by the end of the decade that passenger service had become nothing but a financial burden (Evanson 2006). Unfortunately for the railroads, the ICC regulated interstate passenger routes and services, and generally required the private companies to continue regular service on the mainlines. In 1955, UP cut some expenses by switching its *City* fleet of streamliners to the Milwaukee Road between Omaha and Chicago. The federal Transportation Act of 1958 authorized the ICC to hear “train-off” petitions for intrastate passenger service, effectively overriding the Nebraska Railway Commission in its attempts to maintain rail passenger service for as many communities as possible (Rich 1986). The ICC subsequently allowed many railroads to drop many passenger trains, which they did at a dramatic rate. By 1959, 11 Class I railroads had stopped passenger traffic altogether (Evanson 2006). But UP, Milwaukee Road, Rock Island, Missouri Pacific, and even Chicago Great Western soldiered on, providing mainline and many branchline services in Nebraska and elsewhere. The branchlines, including C&NW operations, in many counties still depended on rail services, so some routes continued to run single-unit motor cars (descendants of the McKeen cars) and to carry occasional passengers in cabooses or “combine” cars constituting “mixed-train” service (see Bartels and Reisdorff 2002b).

## **DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES AND PIGGYBACK INTERMODAL**

Railroads urgently needed to find ways of decreasing expenses, particularly on long distance freight service, an area where they still maintained a large share of the market. The diesel engine was one means of meeting that goal. As mentioned above, the number of employees needed to maintain and operate a diesel-electric locomotive was significantly smaller than steam

locomotives. In addition to the decreased operational costs, the increased horsepower of diesel locomotives allowed them to haul more freight in a single trip (Brown 1961). In 1946, Class I railroads operated 37,551 steam locomotives in the United States, compared to only 4,441 diesels. In less than 10 years the number of diesels in use would overwhelm the remaining steam locomotives. In 1952, only 16,450 steam locomotives remained in service, yielding to 20,480 diesels. In 1959 the last UP *Big Boys* and *Northerns* made their last runs, with *Northern* No. 844 retained on the roster for eventual excursion runs. By 1968, steam locomotives had all but vanished from the U.S. landscape, with only 21 steam engines in operation along Class I lines in the U.S. (Rich 1986:62). Coupled with declining services and closing of branchlines, the changes to railroads in the post-war period had dramatic impacts on the landscape of Nebraska and the nation as a whole.



Following locomotive building and purchasing restrictions of World War II, and after diesel-electric train power proved itself during heavy and unrelenting wartime traffic, most major railroads immediately ordered diesels to replace steam after 1945. Rock Island's ALCo FA cab units (above, pulling a freight train rather than one of the passenger-streamliner *Rockets* fleet) were typical of early mainline freight diesels, which soon eliminated steam-locomotive shops such as RI's in Fairbury, Nebraska.

Source: Postcard, Google

Creative railroaders in the 1920s recognized—shortly after tractor-trailer competition hit the new paved highways between railroad terminals—that the standard highway trailer would fit neatly onto a standard railroad flatcar, and usually two trailers per railcar. However, the ICC's lack of applicable shipping rates and the proprietary attitudes of many other railroaders limited the obvious "intermodal" forwarding of trailers-on-flat-cars—TOFC in the industry—to a few experiments led by Chicago Great Western in the 1930s. In 1953 several railroads, including the Burlington, pressed the regulatory issue with the surprising result that the ICC "permitted the railroads to work with truckers, shippers, and third parties...to develop this new thing called intermodal," summarized transportation authority David DeBoer (2007:551). Most large

railroads thereupon developed several successful, but not universal, markets for moving truck trailers long distances between major cities, to be carried their final few miles to destination by truck tractor. The TOFC business took the nickname “piggyback” from a popular term for placing one mode upon another. UP’s Pacific Fruit Express embraced the piggyback-intermodal trend starting in 1961 by adding mechanically refrigerated truck trailers to its fleet of refrigerated railcars, just as PFE phased out its old ice-bunker cars and extensive ice-making infrastructure (Klein 1989:499).

## **SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST IN THE 1960S**

During the 1960s, a number of different factors contributed to the railroads’ continued decline in favor of road and air travel and shipping. Federally subsidized highways and road improvements, and federally funded airports gave benefits to the railroad competition, in arguably the same way the land grants had supported railroad development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Evanson 2006). The benefits from the land grants had long faded away, and federal intervention into railroad operations had was a century later more of a burden on the railroad companies than a benefit. Taxation of railroad properties and regulation of traffic, when compared to the infrastructure support that competing methods of transport were receiving, such as federally subsidized roads and airport infrastructure, created an un-level playing field that the railroads couldn’t overcome (Evanson 2006).

Changes in manufacturing and consumer patterns also proved a challenge. Manufacturing during the 1960s saw as its goal an increase of mass-produced, smaller and lighter goods requiring fewer raw materials. For goods transported over the highways or by air, smaller lighter manufactured goods were a benefit, reducing transportation costs and maximizing profits (Meyer and Morton 1975). For the railroads, whose costs were based on weight, these trends were more of a detriment. As a result, the cost of carrying freight by truck decreased during the 1960s, while the relative costs by rail increased. Further complicating these financial struggles, trucking companies enjoyed more flexibility to haggle with customers over shipping rates, while railroads had virtually all rates regulated by the ICC. To compete in a free market, the railroads had to petition the ICC to adjust rates for competitive charges. This lack of railroad flexibility made shipping over highways an attractive choice for many Nebraska farmers (Goddard 1994). At the same time, labor disputes resulting from outdated labor conditions and the general trend of rising wages increased expenses for railroad companies by approximately 40 percent (Evanson 2006).

With most Americans now seeing the automobile and paved highways as the preferred means of travel, the railroads were unable to balance those costs with increased passenger-train fares. Already, railroad costs were making long distance rail travel less favorable. In the mid 1960s, William Quinn, president of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, commented (without accounting for complex costs of infrastructure and vehicles) that a new Boeing 727 jet airplane could travel from Chicago to Denver in two hours for a labor cost of \$391. The same trip over the railroad would take 18.5 hours and cost \$2,288 for labor alone (Evanson 2006: 30).

Increased labor costs and decreased traffic resulted in a decline in maintenance, as railroads were less able to afford routine track inspections and repairs. This led to more disruptions, giving further incentives for freight and passenger traffic to choose alternative transportation. Further impacting the railroads was the decline of U.S. Mail service on all but mainlines, and loss of lucrative contracts with the military, which viewed declining service as a threat to military readiness, and sought alternatives through highway and air service (Reebel 2003; Evanson 2006). Freight traffic in bulk raw materials continued to be a strong business for the railroads, but by the mid-1960s rail passenger traffic and the transportation of manufactured goods had severely declined (Meyer and Morton 1975).

Mergers, downsizing, and reduced labor forces became the necessary means for railroads to survive the 1960s and following decades. Mergers, such as the formation of Burlington Northern in 1970 (combining the CB&Q, Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railroads), allowed for reduced overhead and labor costs as duplicated services could be discontinued (Keeler 1983; Evanson 2006).



Despite declining passenger train revenues in the early 1960s, Union Pacific continuing buying new equipment for its long-distance streamliners, including nine Railway Post Office cars from the Budd Company in 1963. RPO No. 5908 (renumbered 903690 as a tool car in the 1970s) subsequently served UP's trains and the U.S. Mail only until 1967 when the Post Office Department cancelled most of its in-route railroad mail-sorting contracts (UtahRails.com). The 5908 is displayed (in 2014) at the Rails West Museum in Council Bluffs.

Photograph: James Steely 2013

Decreased passenger traffic also meant a reduced need for employees. The almost universal adoption of the diesel-electric locomotive eliminated large numbers of employees who were formerly responsible for steam locomotive maintenance. More towns lost their depots and maintenance facilities. In 1956, railroad companies employed 1,042,554 workers across the United States; by 1970 that number had dropped to 566,278 (Rich 1986:56). Overall, through mergers and reduced overhead, the railroads continued to operate and move the heavy freight of the nation. The impact of these changes, however, would have deep impacts on Nebraska's rural communities.

Abandoning passenger lines and short-haul transport of manufactured goods, railroads focused their attention on the one part of the business that still remained profitable, long-haul of raw materials and bulk goods. Even with the expanded highway system, truckers could not compete in hauling most bulk goods and raw materials that were difficult to transport and typically not limited in supply. To help support this business, railroads purchased large grain-hopper cars, to replace the old multi-service boxcars, to carry wheat from Nebraska and other Great Plains states (Wishart 2004). All these methods brought higher profits for the railroads in the early 1960s, although they resulted in a dramatically smaller footprint on the national landscape. The larger and heavier individual grain-hopper cars required heavier rails than most branchlines offered, so the costs of upgrades factored into any profits remaining from numerous marginal branchlines.

The 1960s saw a continuation of the nation's and Nebraska's population shift from rural to urban and suburban areas. Between 1940 and 1960 urban populations in Nebraska increased 50 percent, including the large urban centers of Omaha and Lincoln, and even smaller cities including North Platte and Sidney in the western part of the state. These urban communities were all accessible by rail; however, continuing development of roads and highways began to diminish the role the railroad was playing in most of these communities. Although manufacturing nationwide increased dramatically in the postwar period, in Nebraska the majority of manufacturing concentrated in Omaha. Most of Nebraska remained focused on agriculture.

Growing national prosperity in the decades following World War II, and an increasing concentration of that prosperity in urban and suburban communities, resulted in many towns and cities receiving retail-business face-lifts. New shopping centers appeared, and old ones expanded and upgraded their buildings and facilities (Olson and Naugle 1997). Along with this new development and prosperity came demands for improved transportation, in particular the expansion and improvements of the state's farm roads and highway system. These demands, answered by state and federal governments, meant tough times ahead for the railroad companies.

## **A CHANGING NEBRASKA LANDSCAPE**

With highways spreading across the country and rail service rapidly becoming limited to freight serving large industrial and urban centers, the rural landscape of America began to change. Railroads themselves put their local freight agents into automobiles to represent multiple towns



by driving a circuit on reliable highways between them. Rail companies closed more and more town depots, and substituted mobile agents and long-distance telephones. Businesses far from interstate routes saw traffic travel past them, in favor of new shopping centers at highway off-ramps. Small businesses that could not afford high land prices along the highway struggled to compete with large chains who built services along the highways to serve new urban and suburban populations (Goddard 1994). Repair shops, gas stations, and travel centers reflected America's growing fascination with the automobile, while poorly maintained and understaffed railway depots reflected the continued decline of passenger service on the railroads. Meanwhile, replacement of the family farm with large agro-business and the flood of people settling in urban and suburban neighborhoods beyond rural Nebraska resulted in a landscape of settlement vastly different from that seen even in the middle of the century. Small urban communities along the mainlines such as Sidney thrived if they were able to attract new business, while small branchline communities like Long Pine struggled to survive at all.

As the last westerly Nebraska stop along the Union Pacific transcontinental mainline, Sidney saw steady population increases during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During World War II, the U.S. Army established the Sioux Ordnance Depot, an ammunition storage facility, one of four such facilities located on Nebraska railroads (see Chapter VII). The Army chose Sidney due its location in a dry climate with a source of water, its support for a local labor force, and its access to two railroads. The creation of the weapons depot northwest of town brought thousands of people to Sidney, resulting in a dramatic increase in population and providing an economic resurgence for the small community. The ordnance depot remained active through the Korean and Vietnam conflicts until 1967, when it closed and its facilities thereafter hosted a technical college. After the ordnance plant closure the Sidney area population reverted to its pre-1941 levels (Buhrdorf 2013; Freeman 2012).

Juniata, on the B&MR (now BNSF) saw little change after its loss of the county seat in 1878. The town continued to maintain a modest population as a small agricultural community located, ironically, close to the county seat. The town in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century maintained one of the largest grain elevators in the county, but saw little in the way of substantial commercial or residential development. The survival of the railroad through town has helped to maintain the community, allowing it to weather changes that have meant the end of smaller communities (Renschler 2014).

Long Pine, along the old Chicago & North Western's Cowboy Line, saw a slight resurgence during World War II as increased demands for agricultural goods, some troop-train movements, and increased freight traffic brought economic relief to the region. After the war, the national decline in passenger and freight service brought an end to the brief wartime economic recovery. By the 1950s, passenger traffic through town was dramatically reduced, and the train stopped passenger service to Long Pine entirely by 1958. Throughout the 1960s, many businesses in town closed and what remained of the C&NW kept only a few employees in town. Rail service

through town limped through 1992, when the Cowboy Line, owned after 1995 by the UP and rejected as a potential conduit for coal trains from Wyoming, was soon pulled up (much of the 321-mile branchline is now the Cowboy Trail recreational path) (Schwieterman 2004; Bartels and Reisdorff 2002b:104).

## REASONS TO CELEBRATE

In 1968, Union Pacific partnered with C&NW and Penn Central in experimenting with dedicated coast-to-coast container-train service. UP handled trainloads of standard steel shipping containers off-loaded from ships at Los Angeles, and transferred them at Omaha to C&NW, who transferred them at Chicago to Penn Central for delivery to New York and New Jersey ports. To monitor and invoice such far-flung shipments of diverse consumer goods, and to modernize the old accounting methods of employee records and 24-hour, 7-day crew assignments, Class I railroads in the 1960s embraced new computer and communication technologies. Large mainframe computers in central offices joined microwave telecommunications towers along mainlines to propel the old industry into leadership of the Information Age (Grant 2014:13-14).

In 1969 the UP celebrated its transcendent role in the 1869 completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad. The National Park Service in 1969 unveiled the Golden Spike National Historic Site at Promontory, Utah, location of the meeting of UP and the Central Pacific and of the driving of the last, golden, spike on May 10, 1869. The Park Service named a vintage *American*-type 4-4-0 locomotive the “Union Pacific No. 119” to reenact the historic ceremony, with actors portraying Tom Durant and Grenville Dodge among many others, joining the two railroads and the continent (the Park Service in 1979 commissioned an exact replica of No. 119) (National Park Service 2014b).

UP’s board formed the holding company Union Pacific Corporation in 1969 as part of a restructuring of management for the railroad in conjunction with all its land and natural-resource holdings, most of which came from its 1860s land grants for initial construction. UP also used motive power to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its completion, taking delivery of 47 *Centennial* diesel locomotives, painted in Armour yellow and Harbormist gray just as their 1930s predecessors *M-10000* and the *City of* streamliners. UP numbered the *Centennials*—designated by their Electro-Motive Division builder near Chicago as model *DDA40X*—6900 through 6946. Each double-engine *Centennial* developed 6,600 horsepower and ran more than 1 million miles of freight duty within 5 years. In the mid-1980s UP phased these dazzling locomotives out of service, but donated several for display (No. 6900 is in Omaha’s Kenefick Park and No. 6922 is in North Platte’s Cody Park), and retained No. 6936 in operation for excursion and executive trains (UtahRails.net 2014).



The “class engine,” or first of its type, *Centennial* locomotive No. 6900 built in 1969 is now on static display at Omaha’s Kenefick Park alongside Union Pacific *Big Boy* steam locomotive No. 4023. Kenefick Park, named for former UP chief executive officer John Kenefick, was created to display the two giant locomotives at a highly visible bluff overlooking Interstate Highway 80 and the Missouri River, opposite Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kenefick\\_Park.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kenefick_Park.jpg)

## A CHANGING NEBRASKA RAILROAD MAP

The Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 created the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, better known as Amtrak, ending Nebraska’s private train services in 1971 including the remaining *City of* trains, *Zephyrs*, and *Rockets*. Amtrak took over the *California Zephyr* service from Chicago through Omaha and Lincoln as far as Denver, where for a time the train’s former partner Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad continued to run its own *Zephyr* segment through the Rocky Mountains west to Salt Lake City. From 1977 through 1997 Amtrak ran its three-times weekly *Pioneer* between Chicago and Seattle on Union Pacific through Omaha and Lincoln to Denver, reconnecting with the UP Transcontinental in Cheyenne, and west through Wyoming. Today (2014) the *California Zephyr* is operated daily by Amtrak from Chicago to San Francisco Bay—through Nebraska stopping at Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Holdredge, and McCook—but is the state’s only remaining scheduled passenger train (Amtrak 2014).

In 1970 the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad merged with its old James J. Hill empire partners Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and Spokane, Portland & Seattle, creating the Burlington Northern Railroad. BN continued operating most former Burlington (B&MR, and other original Nebraska affiliates and subsidiaries) mainlines, secondary mainlines, and branchlines for several years, but began abandoning or selling old granger branchlines in the early 1980s (see Chapter IX) (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:23).

In 1972 the Illinois Central Railroad merged with the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio to create the **Illinois Central Gulf Railroad**. ICG maintained its Omaha and Sioux City gateways into Nebraska from Fort Dodge, Iowa, but after 1985 ICG spun off the new **Chicago Central & Pacific Railroad** (aka **Chicago Central**) to operate former IC lines from Chicago west to the two Nebraska interchanges. In 1988 the parent company again became Illinois Central, which in turn reacquired the Chicago Central in 1996. IC sold to Canadian National Railway in 1998, and CN continues (in 2014) to operate under the Chicago Central flag to interchange with UP at Omaha and with BNSF and the Nebraska Northeastern at Sioux City (Canadian National 2014).

The Nebraska Railway Commission, expanded from three to five members in 1964, changed its name in 1972 to the Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) to recognize its expanded communications, energy transportation, commodities, and consumer goods and services regulations. Railroad activities for the PSC, as with other states now overshadowed by the Interstate Commerce Commission, generally confined its commissioners to matters of industry safety. But the safety issue encompassed the long-practiced attachment of a manned caboose to the rear end of every intercity freight train, a critical procedure to railroads, to labor unions, and to the PSC (Nebraska Public Service Commission 2014).

In 1974 the ICC after 14 years of deliberation—a factor in the ICC’s own dismemberment beginning in 1980—approved the UP’s application to absorb the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. However, Rock Island’s ensuing deteriorated property condition caused UP to withdraw the acquisition plan, and the CRI&P entered bankruptcy in 1975. The Rock Island bankruptcy concluded in 1980 with court-ordered liquidation of the company and sale of its viable lines. Much of the railroad was abandoned, including segments of its Lincoln-DeWitt-Fairbury mainline that once had hosted very fast *Denver Rockets* (Rock Island Technical Society 2014).

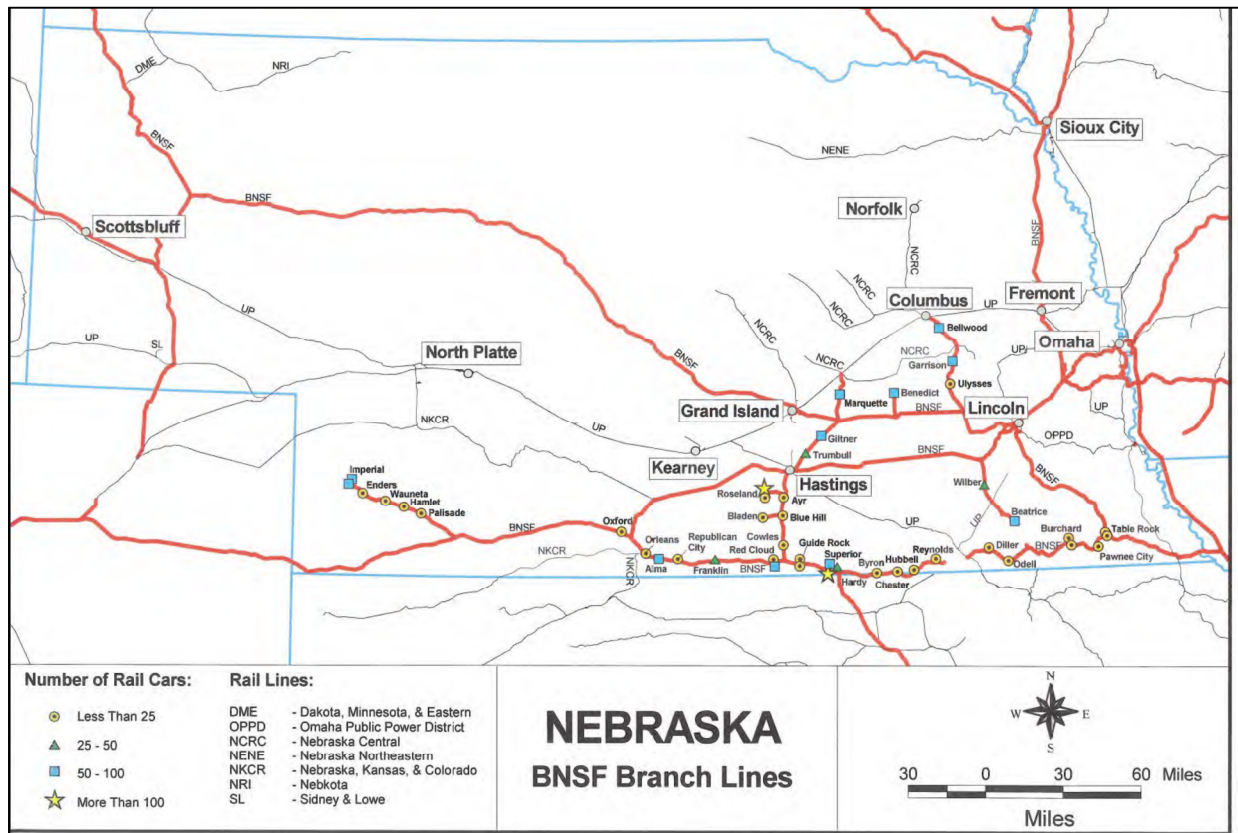
The Chicago & North Western, with meager profits but also much deferred maintenance, began to abandon its far-flung system of granger branches in Nebraska. A C&NW branch built by subsidiary Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad, 115 miles north from Norfolk to the South Dakota line and on to Winner, South Dakota, ceased service in 1978 (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:43).

## **TRANS-NEBRASKA COAL TRAINS**

In positive railroad news for 1974, the Burlington Northern partnered with C&NW to extend their almost century-old, lightly traveled granger branchlines of far western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming into the coalfields of Wyoming’s Powder River Basin. With the federal Clean Air Act of 1970 followed by the Arab Oil Embargo of 1973–1974 and subsequent legislation supporting domestic-energy sources, the Powder River’s plentiful low-sulphur coal experienced rapid popularity with power plants in Wyoming itself, and soon around Chicago and many other urban energy markets. BN track already entered Wyoming’s Powder River Basin from the north out of

Montana, and connected on that line with Nebraska along its Billings, Montana, extension built by subsidiary Grand Island & Wyoming Central in 1893–1894 (see map below).

BN also entered the coalfields from the south along its Bridgeport, Nebraska, branchline built by subsidiary Nebraska, Wyoming & Western in 1900, extended in 1901 into Wyoming through Guernsey and by 1914 to Wendover. C&NW’s trans-Nebraska Cowboy Line, built in 1886 to Chadron and Crawford in the Panhandle, then west to Casper and Lander, Wyoming, crossed the old Burlington line at Shawnee, Wyoming, not far south of the Powder River coalfields (Solomon and Yough 2009:116–119).



BNSF (former Burlington Northern) lines in Nebraska, 2002. Former branchlines in the far west and northwest Panhandle of the state became heavy-traffic mainlines for coal trains from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming (west, left), toward Denver, south of Scottsbluff, and toward the Midwest through Grand Island and Lincoln. Most crossed the Missouri River at Rulo (not labeled) in the extreme southeast. The “NRI”-labeled black line in the northwest was the last remnant of C&NW’s Cowboy Line, mostly removed after 1992. The “NENE”-labeled former Burlington branchline in the northeast, running west of Sioux City, returned to BNSF operation in 2012. Source: Tolliver (2003:67)

The two railroads at first sought separate permissions from the ICC to upgrade and extend these lines, but in 1974 the ICC required the competitive partnership within the Powder River Basin. Soon C&NW dropped out of the deal and in 1976 BN began operating unit coal trains (made up only of coal-laden hopper cars going to one destination) from Wyoming and South Dakota into



Nebraska's Panhandle in far northwest Sioux County and Crawford. These trains then rolled southeast to Alliance and east to connect with original 1870s and 1880s Burlington & Missouri River Railroad lines through Grand Island, Lincoln, and Rulo, and on toward Missouri and Chicago. The coal business rose and fell during the coming decade, but BN eventually and massively upgraded this old route across the entire state—and its alternate through Morrill and Bridgeport, thence south through Sidney toward Denver—with heavier rail, new signal systems, and double-tracking. One casualty of the coal-boom upgrades in 1982 was the BN's bypass of Nebraska's only railroad tunnel, built at Belmont over steep Crawford Hill by the GI&WC in 1888–1889 (Frailey 1989:40–47).

The federal Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976, prompted by the massive Penn Central Railroad bankruptcy reverberating from the Northeast to Chicago and St. Louis, relaxed the ICC's rate setting details and its prevention of collective pricing between connecting railroads. The act set the stage for more mergers, and for complete deregulation of the ICC's former control over rates and services to certain places and certain markets. The mid-1970s Powder River Basin coal shipment-deals hammered out by Burlington Northern anticipated this regulatory revolution. BN and UP eventually benefitted enormously through regulatory reforms begun in 1976 (Broadley and Hoppe 2007:933–934).

## **CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION: STAGGERS ACT, MODERN MERGER ERA, DOUBLE STACKS, AND COAL TRAINS (1980–2014)**

### **DEREGULATION, INCREASED MERGING, AND ACCELERATING TO 70 MPH**

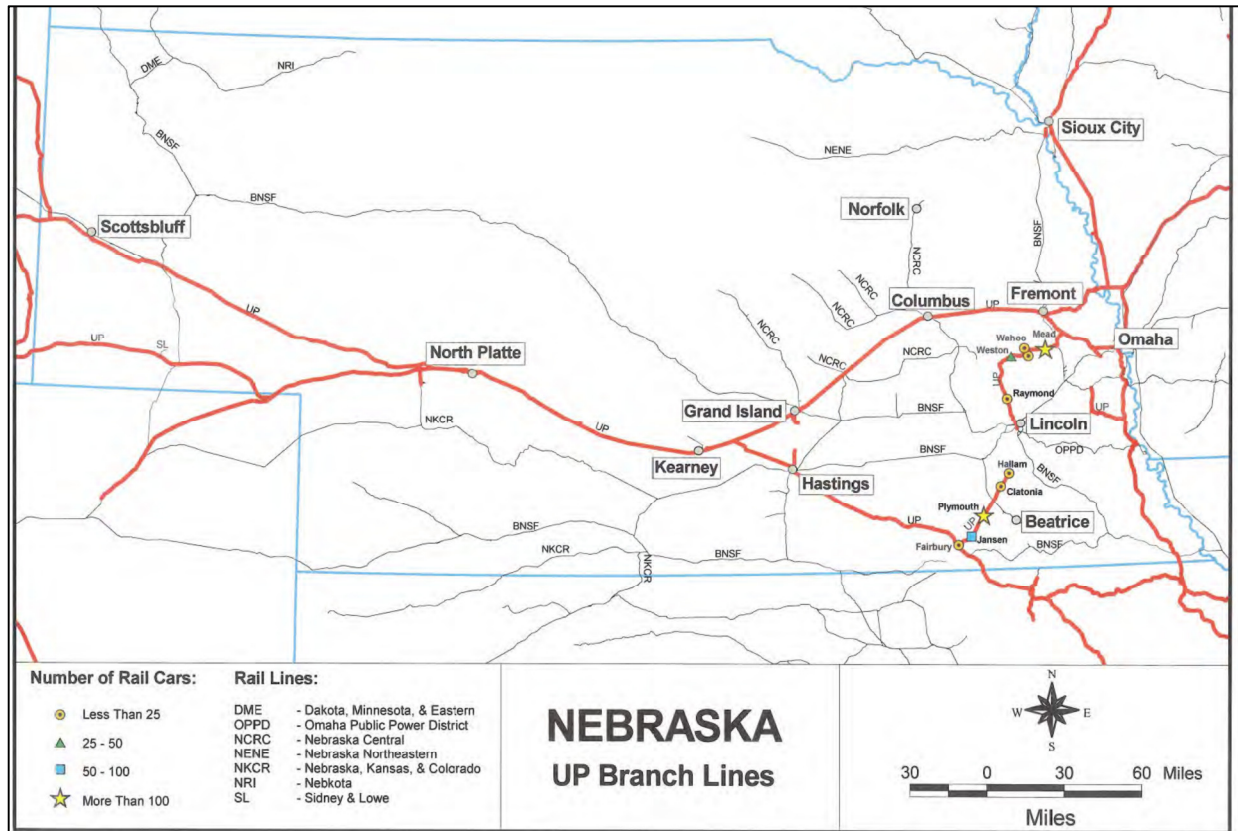
The federal Staggers Rail Act of 1980 opened up unregulated competition between railroads and other carriers, and greatly reduced the ICC's authority to approve mergers and line abandonments. The act further reduced the power of state regulatory agencies, including the Nebraska Public Service Commission, to place restrictions on railroads engaged in interstate transportation. Passage of the Staggers Act "received surprisingly little publicity," railroad historian Maury Klein (2011:125) described.

Ever since the demise of the passenger business, the railroads had passed from the general public's consciousness. Hardly anyone realized that Staggers betokened a new era in railroad history, and that not only the map but the very nature of railroads would never be the same again. (Klein 2011:125)

Union Pacific Railroad and the former Gould lines Missouri Pacific and Western Pacific applied in 1980 on the heels of the Staggers Act for ICC approval to merge. The ICC granted permission in 1982, and Omaha-based UP directly entered MP's strong markets in Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. UP particularly benefitted from MP's lucrative services in the Gulf Coast states to ports, oil refineries, and petrochemical plants producing plastics and other consumer-product building blocks. UP always operated fast, efficient, and heavy-capacity tracks through Nebraska with its Transcontinental Overland Route and its mainlines from Julesburg to Denver. UP now moved toward becoming a 70-miles-per-hour mainline freight system, tolerating only certain branchlines that produced large amounts of consistent traffic (Klein 2011).

Meanwhile, the ailing Chicago & North Western Railroad renewed its interest in tapping the Powder River, Wyoming, coal traffic proving so profitable to Burlington Northern. The ICC in 1981 ordered BN to share its Wyoming trunk line, connecting the coal pit-mines along the Powder River, with C&NW. While these two companies haggled over the price of sharing, C&NW considered rebuilding its trans-Nebraska Cowboy Line, as noted above. Then, the Union Pacific showed interest in both the coalfields and C&NW, and agreed to assist the latter with its considerable costs demanded by BN and required for track upgrades. UP ultimately provided C&NW about \$300 million for just the type of competitive enterprise foreseen by the Staggers Act. In 1984 C&NW decided against the 500-mile Cowboy Line rehabilitation and instead built a 54-mile cutoff from the old Cowboy Line near Lusk, Wyoming, south along the Nebraska-Wyoming line. In Nebraska, the new line crossed the North Platte River and BN's track through Morrill, Nebraska, and connected at "South Morrill" with UP's 1910–1911 Bridgeport–Gering line. Later that year the first joint UP-C&NW coal train—110 cars of Powder River coal heading for a power plant on the former Missouri Pacific at Newark, Arkansas—rolled through

South Morrill and turned sharply east to O’Fallon’s Bluff (between Hershey and Sutherland) to enter the UP Transcontinental line. The unit train continued east through the UP towns of North Platte and Gibbon, then along UP’s 1913 Gibbon Cutoff to Hastings, and across southeast Nebraska along the former St. Joseph & Denver City Railroad’s 1872 line to St. Joseph, Missouri, and further connections to Arkansas (Grant 1996:229–230).



Union Pacific lines in Nebraska, 2002. The former branchline in the far west, between North Platte and Scottsbluff and west into Wyoming, became a heavy-traffic mainline for coal trains from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming (west, left), toward the Midwest: east through Grand Island and Fremont, crossing the Missouri River at Blair (not labeled), and southeast through Hastings, crossing into Kansas southeast of Fairbury.

Source: Tolliver (2003:73)

A profitable UP, liberated from granger branchline services by a long series of deregulation steps, took what it needed of old lines, such as segments for unit coal trains through Gering and Hastings, and spun off many light-traffic branches just before and after 1980. In 1979 UP sold its 1922 sugar-beet network west of Gering to what is now (2014) the Wyoming Connect Railroad. Much of UP’s old Omaha & Republican Valley Railroad branch network disappeared, but the new **Nebraska Central Railroad** took over for O&RV branchline services around Columbus and Grand Island, and between Central City and Brainard (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:75). In 1988 UP acquired the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad, a historic St. Louis-based regional carrier. The old “Katy” Railroad provided UP’s growing system with more oil and gas

connections and much needed second mainlines—much cheaper than double-tracking existing single-track lines through the same markets—in Oklahoma and Texas (Union Pacific 2014).

Following a complex series of labor agreements and appeals to state safety administrators including the Nebraska Public Service (former Railway) Commission throughout the 1980s, railroads rapidly eliminated the traditional caboose from freight trains. The railroad caboose car was an American icon, typically sporting a cupola and end platforms, and housing the conductor and rear brakeman on 5-main train crews from the beginning of services in the 1800s.



The Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad in Pierce, Nebraska, is commemorated by the company's standard combination depot and a vintage Chicago & North Western Railroad caboose. C&NW abandoned its 14-mile Norfolk–Pierce branch, built by the FE&MV in 1880, in 1978.

Source: Wikipedia Commons

Railroads often used caboose car-sides as colorful rolling advertisements for their unique logo and catchy service slogan, and the public knew a train had fully passed when the caboose rolled by a street crossing or across a bridge and the conductor waved a friendly hand. But about 1980, railroads asserted that new technologies substituted for all the functions of the caboose, including air-brake monitoring, wheel-journal “hot-box” observation, and track operations formerly manhandled by the occupants from a halted train. Yet even as labor unions in the early 1980s reluctantly agreed to reduce crew sizes and to gradually eliminate manned cabooses, several states including Nebraska passed “caboose laws” requiring continued use of the trailing crew cars for safety reasons. Railroads challenged these laws successfully in courts, and cabooses began to disappear in the mid- to late-1980s. “It did not help...” Maury Klein (2011:177) lamented, “that Nebraska was the last state to give up its [caboose] restrictions.”

Also in the early 1980s as a result of deregulation, advances in technology, and new thinking by company executives, pre-packed seaworthy containers moved in large numbers onto

transcontinental trains for delivery thousands of miles inland of international ports. The standard 8-foot-high by 8-foot-wide and 20-foot-long—available in extended lengths to 40 feet and up to 56 feet—container was developed in the 1950s and perfected by the 1960s for loading onto very large oceangoing ships. Railroads generally accepted container forwarding at Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf ports by the late 1960s when Union Pacific and other railroads placed the standard container units—not coincidentally similar in dimensions to truck trailers without their wheels—onto standard flatcars. Thus the 1930s and 1940s TOFC, or “piggyback” in railroad jargon for Trailer On Flat Car, evolved into Container On Flat Car, COFC. By the mid-1980s several transportation companies including former Harriman-standard Southern Pacific Railroad developed “double-stack” railcars capable of carrying up to 10 containers between couplers: a huge advance for container-on-flat-car, or COFC in rail speak (DeBoer 2007:551–554). “Doublestack service offered... ‘the most important innovation in the railroad industry since dieselization,’” Klein quoted of the Union Pacific’s reaction to the innovative loading. “The [COFC] service had the potential to achieve 40 percent [fuel, time, and crew] savings over conventional TOFC and involved longer hauls” (Klein 2011:277).

By 1989 UP held 25 percent ownership of its old Chicago connector, sometime rival, and recent coal-train partner Chicago & North Western. C&NW at the same time continued to abandon virtually all of its granger branchlines, including Nebraska’s 400-mile-long heart of the 1886 Cowboy Line from Fremont west to Merriman, seeing its last train in 1992. The segment from Merriman west to Chadron operated for a time under the new **Nebkota Railway**, but Nebkota abandoned that segment a few years later. From Chadron north about 13 miles to the South Dakota line and another 192 miles to Colony, Wyoming, the new **Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad** tapped Wyoming bentonite clay mines and interchanged with the BN at Crawford. The Nebraska Central operated short C&NW Cowboy Line segments in Norfolk as part of its former UP branch between Fremont and Norfolk (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:43).

The Interstate Commerce Commission, “with less and less to do,” recorded transportation authority George Smerk (2007:924), was abolished by the ICC Termination Act of 1995, and it transferred its final functions to the Surface Transportation Board (STB). The STB, administratively under the U.S. Department of Transportation, retained authority to approve railroad mergers as well as line sales, abandonments, and construction, and to settle rate and service disputes.

In 1995 UP accumulated 75 percent of C&NW stock and completed its acquisition, with the few surviving C&NW prizes in Nebraska including the 1869 Fremont–Blair mainline built by the Sioux City & Pacific, and its 1924 Missouri River bridge to Chicago. UP also got C&NW’s recent improvements—originally financed by UP—in the Powder River Basin. “PRB” coal shipments subsequently became fiercely competitive between UP and BN, as both expanded these profitable connections to more power plants in the U.S. Midwest, Southwest, Southeast, and Texas. In 1996 the new Surface Transportation Board granted approval for UP to buy the



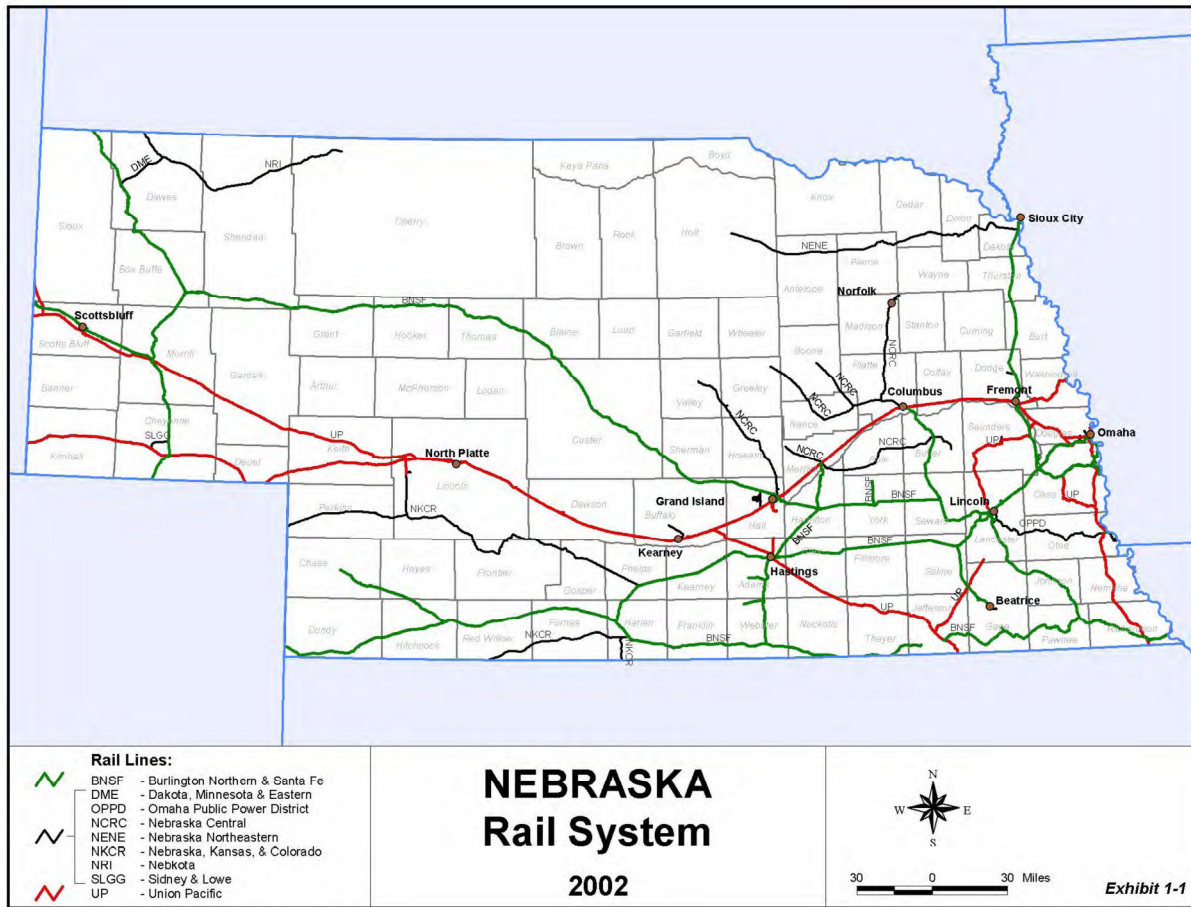
Southern Pacific Railroad, its old California connection and onetime partner between 1901 and 1912 under E.H. Harriman's system. Along with the modern SP came its recent combination with the old Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad in Colorado and Utah, providing several key lines and connections across the Rocky Mountains. Union Pacific Railroad could now boast of being the longest and largest railroad in the United States—31,800 route miles in 23 states and operated by 45,400 employees—headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska (Union Pacific 2014).

Burlington Northern used its coal-train profits and financial stability to continue operating its extensive Nebraska branchline network well into the 1980s. BN initiated merger in 1995 with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway, a transcontinental carrier that had successfully become a 70-miles-per-hour mainline company in other states. The new Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway followed this high-speed mainline policy and spun off any remaining granger branchlines in Nebraska. By the mid-1990s the new **Nebraska Northeastern Railroad** took over Burlington's original 1890 Nebraska & Western Railroad from South Sioux City west 123 miles to O'Neill. The **Omaha Public Power District Railroad** operated Burlington's original 1870 line in Nebraska, 72 miles between Plattsmouth and Lincoln. The nation's second-longest railroad behind UP became simply "**BNSF Railway**" in 2005, and continued to operate its coal trains through Nebraska and its Chicago-Denver mainline through Lincoln, bypassing Omaha at Rulo's 1977 bridge across the Missouri River (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:23).

## INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

These changes to the railroad industry between 1980 and 2000 reverberated across Nebraska, along surviving branchlines and re-energized mainlines alike. Towns along mainline railroads, such as Sidney, that retained their agencies and industrial spurs continued to thrive, while smaller branchlines towns, such as Long Pine, struggled when their railroads cancelled service in the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many Nebraska communities like Neligh and Juniata, and smaller communities like Calloway and Ord, saw all their branchline services end and century-old tracks removed, with no choice for transportation connections but to rely on regional highways and local paved roads. Although most of these communities survived as agricultural centers much as they had for the previous century, many lost between the 1970s though 1990s the railroads that were responsible for establishing and settling them in the first place.

For other Nebraska communities such as Omaha, Lincoln, North Platte, Hastings, and Fremont, their railroad origins and strategic geography placed them along the modern corridors of rail and highway transportation, and they thrive today (2014) largely through those circumstances.



Nebraska's rail system in 2002 remained largely unchanged in 2014. The shortline Nebkota Railroad's operation of a 76-mile segment of the former Chicago & North Western Railroad's Cowboy Line in the northwestern counties of Dawes, Sheridan, and Cherry did not survive. The Nebraska Northeastern Railroad's former 123-mile Burlington branchline in the northeast returned to BNSF operation in 2012 through Dakota, Dixon, Pierce, Antelope, and Holt Counties. Most red lines of the Union Pacific were double- and in places triple-tracked for heavy coal-train and intermodal traffic, and the green BNSF lines were largely heavy-traffic unit-train corridors as well. Anywhere that a line on this map ended as a stub, a Nebraska community hosted businesses or cooperatives that provided on-line loads for the state and national rail system, in many cases railcars filled with seasonal grains as they had been since the lines were built and their communities were founded. Otherwise the red UP and blue BNSF mainlines were corridors for through-traffic across Nebraska, as most were intended from their origins in the 1860s and 1870s. Omaha remained a major rail hub, as did Fremont, Lincoln, Grand Island, and Hastings.

Source: Tolliver (2002:6)

## CHAPTER X: PROFILES OF RAILROAD COMPANIES IN NEBRASKA (1862–1980)

The 1980 milepost dates below place the histories of Nebraska railroads within this Historic Context’s period of significance, 1862–1980. Several major events occurred between 1964 (50 years ago in 2014) and 1980 that affected the traditional profile of Nebraska lines, which had endured largely unchanged in identities since the 1880s.

- The U.S. Post Office Department in 1967 cancelled the majority of its in-route railroad mail-sorting contracts, leading to sweeping passenger train cancellations, including *Zephyrs*, *Rockets*, *City of streamliners*, and most remaining branchline mail and express services.
- The Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 created the Amtrak national passenger railroad in 1971, ending Nebraska’s private train services.
- Also in 1970 the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad merged with its old James J. Hill empire partners Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and Spokane, Portland & Seattle, creating the Burlington Northern Railroad, but with little immediate effect on the former Burlington’s Nebraska operations, other than locomotive paint schemes.
- In 1972 the Illinois Central merged with the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio to create the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad. ICG maintained its Omaha and Sioux City gateways to Nebraska, and kept that name until 1988, reverting to IC.
- In 1974 the ICC approved the UP’s 14-year-old application to absorb the Rock Island, but RI’s ensuing property condition caused UP to decline, and the RI entered bankruptcy.
- The Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976 primarily dealt with the massive Penn Central Railroad bankruptcy from the Northeast west to Chicago, but also relaxed the ICC’s rate setting details and ended the prohibition of collective pricing between connecting railroads.
- The Staggers Rail Act of 1980 opened up unregulated competition between railroads and other carriers and greatly reduced the ICC’s authority to regulate mergers and line abandonments.
- UP and the former Gould lines Missouri Pacific and Western Pacific applied in 1980 for ICC approval to merge. (The ICC granted approval in 1982.)
- The Rock Island bankruptcy concluded in 1980 with liquidation of the company and sale of its viable lines; much of the railroad was abandoned.

---- I ----

## “CLASS I” RAILROADS OPERATING TRANS-NEBRASKA LINES

### Union Pacific / UP

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Union Pacific Railroad created by the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862.
  - Union Pacific Railway created through Gould mergers, 1880.
  - Union Pacific Railroad after reorganization in 1897.
  - UP Corporation created on January 30, 1969, as a holding company to manage the Union Pacific Railroad and its non-railroad interests.
- Headquarters:
  - Omaha, Nebraska, since 1864.
  - Current address (since 2004): Union Pacific Railroad, 1400 Douglas Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68179.



**Union Pacific Railroad prior to late 20<sup>th</sup> century mergers.**

Source: <http://www.american-rails.com/union-pacific.html>

- Names, dates, and general location/mileage of component lines in Nebraska merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - The Union Pacific was the first railroad in Nebraska, and began construction at Omaha and pushed west into Nebraska along the Platte and North Platte Rivers. Construction of branches began in the 1870s continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century to reach towns such as Fairbury, Lincoln, Beatrice, Norfolk, Albion, and Pleasanton.
  - The UP operated its mainline across central Nebraska through the Platte River Valley across the Platte drainages. Branchlines to the north and south of the mainline were mostly confined to the Lower Loup and lower Elkhorn River Drainages. Additional branchlines extended into the northern part of central Nebraska, as well as both Blue River drainages toward the southern border of the state.
  - 1876 – Jay Gould authorized several UP branchlines in Nebraska under various names, soon consolidated under operations of the Omaha & Republican Valley Railroad.
  - January 24, 1880 – Kansas Pacific and Denver Pacific acquired by Union Pacific Railway Company (new name) under the ownership of Jay Gould.
  - 1880s – UP gained control of the St. Joseph & Grand Island Railway Company and used its route from Hastings to Missouri to move traffic around Omaha.
  - January 31, 1898 – E.H. Harriman acquired Union Pacific Railway out of bankruptcy, reorganized it under the new name Union Pacific Railroad Company.
  - 1901 – UP gains control of the Southern Pacific.
  - 1906 – UP establishes Pacific Fruit Express, railroad refrigerator-car and leasing company, in partnership with Southern Pacific.
  - 1906–1907 – Branchline extension built from Stromsburg to Central City, leading to establishment of the communities of Polk and Hordville.
  - December 1912 – UP and Southern Pacific separated after the Supreme Court determined their combination was a violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act and required them to break up.
  - 1960–1974 – UP applied in 1960 to the ICC to acquire the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. The ICC approved the merger in 1974. UP then terminated its merger plans due to stipulations in the approval agreement and the financial state of the Rock Island. The Rock Island ceased operations in 1980.
  - January 30, 1969 – UP Railroad Board of Directors form Union Pacific Corporation.
  - May 1, 1971 – All passenger services transferred from UP to Amtrak (National Rail Service Passenger Act of 1970).



- Reason for the railroad's entry into Nebraska, and summary of Nebraska operations (granger, bridge traffic, other):
  - Union Pacific created by President Lincoln upon signing the 1862 Pacific Railroad Act for the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad generally following emigrant routes. Executive order in 1864 placed the eastern terminus at Council Bluffs, Iowa, across from Omaha because of the suitability of a Missouri crossing in the vicinity, and a good river landing on the Nebraska shore.
  - The UP after completion of the Transcontinental in 1869 focused on bridge traffic across Nebraska and was resistant to establishment of branchline and granger services. In 1876 UP established its first branchlines south and north of the Platte to capture granger traffic, to prevent the expansion of other railroads in Nebraska, and to serve the new state capital at Lincoln. The granger branches included the Marysville & Blue Valley Railroad, the Manhattan & Blue Valley Railway, the Omaha, Niobrara & Black Hills Railroad, and the Blue Valley Railway. These companies were soon integrated into the Omaha & Republican Valley Railroad.
  - The UP offered signature passenger service with its Transcontinental connections on the "Overland Route" between 1869 and 1971, as well as its City of trains originating in Chicago via associated carriers (from the 1930s C&NW then in 1955 Milwaukee Road) to Omaha and terminating at Denver, Portland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Connecting branchline passenger services along O&RV routes met these name trains at the UP mainline through the 1950s. UP also partnered with Wabash for their *City of St. Louis* between Cheyenne, then Ogden, and Omaha, southeast through Iowa and Missouri.
- Town-development affiliate in Nebraska:
  - The UP operated and had relationships with several land development companies to dispose of the land granted to it by the federal government. The most well-known company was Credit Foncier founded in 1866 by George Francis Train who was also at times responsible for the managing the railroad stockholders' construction company Credit Mobilier.
  - Town development was both anticipated and facilitated by the UP during and after the construction of its transcontinental mainline.
  - Land grants totaled 4,848,668 federal acres; StJ&GI received 380,769 federal acres.
- Maximum route miles and operations in Nebraska:
  - The UP operated 1,358.31 miles of track in Nebraska by 1927 (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:75), including the St. Joseph & Grand Island Railway Company.
  - The UP currently operates 1,067 miles in Nebraska, employing 7,864 people with a payroll of \$1.1 billion.
  - Maps: [http://www.up.com/aboutup/history/photos/historical\\_maps/index.htm](http://www.up.com/aboutup/history/photos/historical_maps/index.htm)

- Mergers and abandonments (also see #4), including those after 1980:
  - Mergers:
    - Kearney & Black Hills Railway – 1890
    - St. Joseph & Grand Island RR – 1885/lost in the 1890s/reacquired 1906
    - Western Pacific Railroad – merged 1982
    - Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad – merged in 1988
    - Chicago & North Western – merged in 1995
    - Missouri Pacific Railroad –merged on January 1, 1997
    - Southern Pacific – merged on September 11, 1996. Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad - Rio Grande Industries had been merged into SP on September 12, 1988, and the two combined on October 13, 1988, operating under the name Southern Pacific.
  - Abandoned and Sold: (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:75)
    - Branch between Noelus and Pleasanton – following 1945 flood
    - Kearney–Stapleton Branch cut back 19.36 miles (Stapleton to Arnold) – 1977; cut back 73+ miles (to Riverdale) – 1985; scrapped in 1993.
    - Panhandle sugar beet spurs around Gering, sold – 1979
    - Branches—Columbus through Oconee to Norfolk; Oconee through Genoa to Albion; Genoa to Spaulding; Grand Island to Ord; and Central City to Brainard—leased or sold to shortline Nebraska Central Railroad – 1993
- Best historical sources on UP’s operations:
  - Timelines:
    - [http://www.up.com/timeline/index.cfm#index.cfm/union-pacific-corporation?&\\_suid=541](http://www.up.com/timeline/index.cfm#index.cfm/union-pacific-corporation?&_suid=541)
    - [http://UtahRails.net/up/up-timeline-1864-1880.php#heading\\_toc\\_j\\_1](http://UtahRails.net/up/up-timeline-1864-1880.php#heading_toc_j_1)
    - <http://www.up150.com/timeline>
- Current (2014) affinity historical society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Union Pacific Historical Society: <http://uphs.org/>
    - “Founded in 1984, the Union Pacific Historical Society (UPHS) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the history of the Union Pacific Railroad from its beginning in 1862 to the operation as it is today.” Not affiliated with the railroad; located in Cheyenne Wyoming.
  - “Union Pacific Railroad, RG3761.AM.” Nebraska State Historical Society:
    - <http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/business/union-pacific.htm>

- P.O. Box 82554, 1500 R Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501
- “The Union Pacific Railroad collection consists of nearly 750 linear feet of records dating from 1862-1980s organized into subgroups and series. Records fall into one of three categories: 1) Corporate Offices, 2) Branch Roads and Subsidiary Companies and 3) Miscellany. Detailed inventories are available for each subgroup and series within the collection. Many of the records relating to the early building of the railroad (1862-ca. 1900) have been microfilmed and can be requested through interlibrary loan.”
- Union Pacific Railroad Museum, Council Bluffs Iowa:
  - 200 Pearl Street, Council Bluffs, Iowa
  - [http://www.uprrmuseum.org/museum/about\\_us/index.shtml](http://www.uprrmuseum.org/museum/about_us/index.shtml): “A unique arrangement was established where the City leases the [1903 Carnegie Library] building to Union Pacific and Union Pacific pays the museum's general operating (building-related) expenses. The Friends of the Museum raised the original construction and renovation funds, and currently supplies museum volunteers, and finances the maintenance of, and upgrades to, the museum's extensive exhibits. The Union Pacific Railroad Museum was formally opened on May 10, 2003, the one hundred thirty-fourth anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad.”
- Union Pacific Railroad Museum
  - <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/business-archives-section/directory-of-corporate-archives-in-the-united-states-and-canada-indexed-by-location>
  - 1416 Dodge Street, Room 114, Omaha, Nebraska 68179
  - “Union Pacific Railroad – Museum Services department– Union Pacific Railroad Museum Holdings: 1862–present; bulk dates, 1910-present Total Volume: 2,500 cubic feet Correspondence, architectural and mechanical drawings, engineering files and more than 500,000 images relating to Union Pacific, Missouri Pacific and subsidiary roads and their role in the development of transportation in the West”
- Denver Public Library
  - [Grenville M.] Dodge family papers (1850–1903)
  - <http://catalog.denverlibrary.org/search/title.aspx?pos=73>
  - 10 West Fourteenth Avenue Parkway, Denver, Colorado 80204
  - “Personal and business correspondence and papers and battle reports, relating to the building of the Iowa Railroad, Civil War activities, the building of the Texas and Colorado Railroad, economic conditions in the 1850's, the Union Pacific Railroad's construction, a journey to Europe, and family affairs. Includes letters from Dodge's wife, Anne B. Dodge, discussing Civil War camp life;

correspondence between Dodge's brother, Nathan P. Dodge, and his mother, Julia T. Dodge; diaries (1852-1869) of Nathan describing school in Danvers, Mass., life in Elkhorn, Neb., Indian troubles, railroad work, a trip to the West, and banking business and social life in Council Bluffs, Iowa; and correspondence and other papers (1854-1870) of Dodge's father, Sylvanus Dodge, relating to pioneer life in Iowa and Nebraska and experiences with Pawnee Indians.”



### Chicago, Burlington & Quincy / CB&Q, Burlington Route



**Burlington Route prior to 1970 merger into Burlington Northern.**

Source: <http://www.american-rails.com/chicago-burlington-and-quincy.html>

- Full name of railroad in 1980: Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad
  - The CB&Q and three other major railroads merged to form the Burlington Northern Railroad on March 2, 1970 (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:23).
  - CB&Q was referred to as the “Burlington” or “The Q”.

- In Nebraska the railroad originated in 1870 as the “Burlington & Missouri River Rail Road in Nebraska” (B&MRinN). B&MR merged into CB&Q in 1904.
- Slogans: “Everywhere West,” “Way of the Zephyrs,” “The Way West.”
- Current name (2014):
  - Burlington Northern merged with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway at the end of 1996 to form the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway, changed to simply BNSF Railway in 2005.
  - BNSF Railway was purchased in 2009 by Berkshire Hathaway Inc., owned by Warren Buffet of Omaha.
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - Chartered on February 12, 1849, as the Aurora [Illinois] Branch Railroad.
  - Renamed Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad – February 14, 1855.
  - Headquarters were in Chicago, Illinois, moved to Fort Worth, Texas, in the 1990s.
  - The regional headquarters for Burlington lines west of the Missouri were in Omaha until 1970 (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:23).
- Names, dates, and general location/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - The railroad covered the entirety of southern part of Nebraska below the Platte and South Platte Rivers, eastern and central Nebraska in the Platte and Papio-Missouri River drainages, the Loup drainages in central Nebraska, and the Upper Niobrara, North Platte, and South Platte Drainages on the western edge of the state.
  - February 12, 1849 – Aurora Branch Railroad chartered (from Aurora, Illinois, to connect to Galena & Chicago Union RR). It was the first to serve the Chicago Union Stockyards.
  - 1852 – Renamed Chicago & Aurora Railroad, built to Mendota, Illinois, to connect with Illinois Central Railroad.
  - February 14, 1855 – Renamed Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad.
  - 1870 – The CB&Q first entered Nebraska as the B&MR with a connection from the banks of the Missouri River at Plattsmouth to Lincoln. After reaching Lincoln, in 1871 the B&MR acquired the Omaha & Southwestern [or South Western] Railroad to obtain access into Omaha. The railroad then built west from Lincoln through farming communities to connect with the Union Pacific at Kearney, an interchange provision required of the UP under its federal charter.
  - Crete reached from Lincoln in 1871.
  - 1880 – The B&MR built its Missouri River bridge at Plattsmouth, and in 1882 the CB&Q’s direct line from Chicago to Denver was completed along the Republican River.



- 1886 – The CB&Q pushed northwest and reached Broken Bow in the fall of that year. The line continued and reached what would become Alliance in the Sandhills in 1888.
  - The Ashland to Sioux City line via Fremont was completed in 1906.
- Reason for the railroads entry into Nebraska, and summary of Nebraska operations (granger, bridge traffic, other):
  - The B&MR sought to control both transcontinental traffic from the UP far west of Omaha.
  - By reaching the new capital of Lincoln as its first railroad, BM&R gained political influence for new lines and townsite establishment.
  - The railroad founded townsites and operated granger services across Nebraska.
  - From the 1930s, the CB&Q provided signature passenger services on the railroad's *Denver Zephyr* streamliners between Chicago and Denver, other *Zephyrs* Lincoln and south of Omaha, and through connections to Oakland/San Francisco on the *California Zephyr*.
- Town-development affiliates:
  - The B&MR established the town development companies Eastern Land Associates and the Lincoln Land Company in order to dispose of its federally granted lands.
  - Burlington and local businessmen established the East Omaha Land Company in 1887 to foster industrial development in Omaha.
  - Land grants totaled 2,374,091 federal acres, and B&MR plus affiliates Midland Pacific, Omaha & South Western, Burlington & Southwestern, and Atchison & Nebraska received total land grants of 273,341 state acres.
- Maximum route miles operated in Nebraska, with number of incorporated communities served (link to map) with 3 to 6 examples.
  - As of 1927 the CB&Q had 2,870.13 miles of track in Nebraska, the largest single mileage in any state it served.
  - BNSF as of 2000 operated 1,741 miles in the state (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:23).
- Mergers and abandonments:
  - Mergers:
    - The Omaha and South Western [or Southwestern] Railroad in 1870 built a line from Omaha south to the Platte River, where ferry service accessed the 1870 B&MR line from Plattsmouth across the river; B&MR/CB&Q acquired the line in 1871.
    - The Burlington and Missouri River (B&MR) Railroad was leased first to the CB&Q for through-connections (1872) and deeded to CB&Q in 1875. The

Combined company completed the first direct line Denver to Chicago in 1882, through Omaha and Lincoln. B&MR folded into CB&Q in 1904.

- Abandonments: (See <http://www.burlingtonroute.com/docs/route/abandonments.html>)
  - Chalco Junction to Yutan (east end) – 8.08 miles – 1928
  - Chalco Junction to Yutan (west end) – 3.79 miles – January 29, 1927
  - Beatrice to Rockford – 8.5 miles – October 12, 1931
  - Fairmont to McCool Junction – 6.99 miles – February 27, 1932
  - Yutan to Allis – 4.87 miles – March 7, 1934
  - Greeley Center to Ericson – 17.38 miles – April 11, 1940
  - Ayr Junction to Alma – 18 miles – April 20, 1940
  - Fairfield Junction to Clay Center – 7.16 miles – April 20, 1940
  - Prague to Schuyler – 18.67 miles – November 13, 1941
  - Superior to Nelson – 12.95 miles – October 8, 1942
  - Salem to Shubert – 10.87 miles – October 8, 1942
  - Benedict to Stromsburg – 7.14 miles – October 9, 1942
  - Chester to Hebron – 11.43 miles – October 26, 1942
  - Alma to Huntley – 9.77 miles – December 5, 1942
  - Tecumseh Junction to Rockford – 24.07 miles – December 14, 1943
  - Helvey to KC&O Junction – 4.27 miles – June 19, 1945
  - Lushton to McCool Junction – 7.20 miles – May 1, 1955
  - Hildreth to Holdredge – 17.60 miles – May 11, 1955
  - Nemaha to Auburn – 9.81 miles – May 11, 1955
  - Daykin to Helvey – 4.61 miles – November 20, 1957
- Best historical sources on this railroad's operations:
  - General background:
    - <http://bn9900.hubpages.com/hub/History-of-the-Burlington-Northern-Railroad>
    - <http://www.newberry.org/railroad-archives>
    - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago,\\_Burlington\\_and\\_Quincy\\_Railroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago,_Burlington_and_Quincy_Railroad)
    - <http://burlingtonroute.com/>
    - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burlington\\_Northern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burlington_Northern)
  - Books:
    - Bartels, Michael M., & James J. Reisdorff (2002a). *Ghost Railroads of Nebraska-A Pictorial*. South Platte Press. ISBN 0934904480, 9780934904483
    - Bartels, Michael M., & James J. Reisdorff (2002b). *Historic Railroads of Nebraska*. Arcadia Publishing Company. Chicago IL. ISBN 978-0-7385-2035-3
    - Little, Brown (1949). *Granger Country: A Pictorial Social History of the Burlington Railroad*. University of Michigan.

- Other Resources:
  - [http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index\\_nby\\_rrlife.php?CISOROOT=/nby\\_rrlife](http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index_nby_rrlife.php?CISOROOT=/nby_rrlife) - Collection of CB&Q photography
  - [http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/cbq\\_hist.html](http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/cbq_hist.html) - “merger tree”
  - <http://www.burlingtonroute.com/docs/library/biblio.html> - Bibliography used by the BRHS.
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Burlington Route Historical Society (BRHS)
    - <http://www.burlingtonroute.com/cbq.html>
    - “The Burlington Route Historical Society (BRHS) is an Illinois non-profit corporation whose membership consists of diverse group of historians, collectors, railfans, photographers, modelers and railroad employees who have banded together to share one common interest, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad”
  - Newberry Research Library (period covered 1840–1965)
    - <http://www.newberry.org/railroad-archives>
    - 60 West Walton Street, Chicago Illinois 60610
    - “The CB&Q archives at the Newberry (ca. 5,000 cubic feet) mainly document the nineteenth century operations of the Burlington and its component roads. There is also significant twentieth century material, including the correspondence of CB&Q president Ralph Budd, and numerous photographs and pamphlets dealing with the Zephyrs and the promotion of tourism.”



### **Chicago & North Western / C&NW, CNW, North Western**

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Chicago & North Western Railway
  - Prior to sale to its employees in 1972, Chicago and North Western Transportation Company.
  - One of the classic Midwestern “Granger Railroads.”
  - Nicknames include the “North Western” which referred to the entire system, the “Omaha Road” for its Sioux City–Norfolk and Omaha lines (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a:43), and the “Cowboy Line” for the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley.
- Current name (2014) if different because of merger:
  - Union Pacific Railroad merged with C&NW in 1995.

- A 17-mile segment, Fremont to Hooper, of the C&NW's former affiliate Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley is now the shortline Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad, which hosts the Nebraska Railroad Museum in Fremont.
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - Chartered in 1836 as the Galena & Chicago Union, this first component of C&NW was the first railway to operate out of Chicago, in 1848.
  - Headquarters of C&NW began and ended in Chicago, Illinois.



**Chicago & North Western Railway prior to merger into Union Pacific in 1995.**

Source: <http://www.american-rails.com/chicago-and-north-western.html>

- Names, dates, and general location/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - In Nebraska, the C&NW operated the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha, “the Omaha Road” south of Covington/South Sioux City, branching down the Missouri River to Omaha and southwest to Norfolk.
  - C&NW also operated the Sioux City & Pacific, which entered Nebraska from Iowa at Blair. SC&P served at different times as the name of record for other affiliates.

- From Norfolk between 1871 and 1880 the C&NW's Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley, "the Elkhorn Route," moved northwest through Norfolk along the Elkhorn River, eventually to the Black Hills of South Dakota and into central Wyoming. South of Fremont, an FE&MV granger branchline ran southwest to Superior, where it met a Kansas branch of the AT&SF near the Kansas line. The Nebraska communities of Chadron, Norfolk, Fremont, and Long Pine served as major centers for C&NW railroad activity. The C&NW operated the Elkhorn Route in northern Nebraska in the Niobrara, Lewis and Clark, and Elkhorn River drainages, east-central Nebraska in the Platte and Papio-Missouri River drainages, and southeastern Nebraska in the Blue River drainages.
- Reason for the railroads entry into Nebraska, and summary of Nebraska operations (granger, bridge traffic, other):
  - C&NW was Nebraska's second largest railroad and primarily supplied granger services to small farming communities. Livestock transportation peaked in 1947 before decreasing due to the rise of truck transportation.
  - The C&NW operated signature passenger service in conjunction with the Union Pacific for the City streamliner fleet between Omaha and Chicago. C&NW in other states operated its fleet of 400s into the 1950s and 1960s. The line provided only branchline passenger services elsewhere in Nebraska.
  - The FE&MV operated granger service within the state and bridge service to cities and towns outside of Nebraska such as Belle Fourche, South Dakota, and Casper, Wyoming.
- Town-development affiliate:
  - Pioneer Townsite Company.
  - C&NW's affiliates accumulated 180,000 acres of state land grants in Nebraska.
- Maximum route miles operated in Nebraska:
  - C&NW operated more than 1,400 miles of lines in Nebraska (Bartels and Reisdorff 2002a).
  - The railroad served approximately 40 incorporated towns and cities including Omaha and Lincoln. Other smaller communities included Fremont, Chadron, Hastings, and Superior.
- Mergers and abandonments: (see: [http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/cnw\\_hist.html](http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/cnw_hist.html))
  - February 15, 1865 – 1959 predecessors merged with Galena & Chicago Union Railroad (G&CU).
  - 1867 – The Winona & St. Peter Railroad was added and the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad (leased to the G&CU) reached Council Bluffs.



- 1901 – The C&NW officially entered Nebraska with absorption of affiliate Sioux City & Pacific, where it had connected with and controlled the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha (Omaha Road) since 1882; C&NW operated the Omaha Road separately until 1957 when it was fully integrated with C&NW.
- 1903 – C&NW officially absorbed the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad.
- The C&NW continued full granger service along all lines until the 1950s when it began to abandon tracks in the northern part of the state. In Nebraska, branchline passenger service to Chadron ended in 1958 and throughout the entire network in the 1970s. Unit grain trains and bridge service east of Fremont gained importance in the 1960s as a transcontinental bypass around Omaha to Chicago. The Union Pacific partnered with the C&NW in 1978 to gain access to bridge-traffic and unit-train service between Fremont and Chicago. The C&NW was fully acquired by the Union Pacific in 1995.
- C&NW abandoned most of the former FE&MV in increments in 1878 and 1992.
- Best historical sources on this railroad's operations:
  - General Background:
    - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago\\_and\\_North\\_Western\\_Transportation\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_and_North_Western_Transportation_Company)
    - <http://www.answers.com/topic/chicago-and-north-western-holdings-corporation>
  - Books
    - Bartels, Michael M., & James J. Reisdorff (2002a). *Ghost Railroads of Nebraska- A Pictorial*. South Platte Press. ISBN 0934904480, 9780934904483
    - Grant, H. Roger (1996). *The North Western – A history of the Chicago & North Western Railway System*. Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, IL. ISBN 0-87580-214-1.
    - Murray, Tom, ed. (2008). *Chicago & North Western Railway*. Voyageur Press. ISBN 0-7603-2546-4
  - Other Resources:
    - [http://www.cnwhs.org/ch\\_cnw.htm](http://www.cnwhs.org/ch_cnw.htm) - Chicago and North Western Historical Society (extensive time line).
    - [http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/cnw\\_hist.html](http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/cnw_hist.html) - “Merger tree” of the railroad.
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Chicago and North Western Historical Society
    - <http://www.cnwhs.org/archives.htm>
    - “An Illinois not-for-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the legacy of the C&NW and its predecessor roads since 1973.”

- Archives access: Joe Pierson, archives@cnwhs.org (preferred method of contact); 1343 Knollwood Road, Deerfield, Illinois 60015
- Finding aide listing can be viewed at:  
<https://www.ulib.niu.edu/reghist/RC%2051.pdf>



## “CLASS I” RAILROADS WITH MEDIUM ROUTE-MILES IN NEBRASKA

### Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific / CRI&P, Rock Island



**Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad at the time of liquidation in 1980.**

Source: <http://www.american-rails.com/chicago-rock-island-and-pacific.html>

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad when liquidated in 1980.
  - Entered receivership in 1975.
  - Some of its principal routes are still being used by other railroads, including Union Pacific.
  - Slogan: “Route of the Rockets,” “The Rock.”
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - Established as the Rock Island & La Salle Railroad Company in the 1840s.
  - Renamed Chicago & Rock Island Railroad in 1852 after contractor Henry Farnam convinced its managers to make a direct connection from the Mississippi River east to Chicago.
  - Name changed to the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway in 1866 when the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad merged with its subsidiary the Mississippi & Missouri (M&M), which was building west to connect with the Union Pacific.
  - Regional headquarters for the railroad’s Western Division were established at Fairbury, Nebraska, in 1886, for operations from Council Bluffs to Colorado. These offices closed in 1965 in a consolidation with the Des Moines Division.
- Names dates, and general location/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - The CRI&P operated 250 miles in southeastern Nebraska south of the Platte River.
  - The railroad was the second to reach Council Bluffs as the M&M in May 1869, but the railway did not enter Nebraska until 1886 when it built from Kansas to Fairbury and Beatrice through subsidiary Chicago, Kansas & Nebraska originating at St. Joseph, Missouri.
  - April 3, 1887 – A segment from Horton, Missouri, to Hebron, Nebraska, was opened and terminated at Nelson, Nebraska, the western terminus of the line, later cut back to Ruskin, and abandoned c. 1980.
  - 1890–1893 – The railroad established service to Denver through St. Joseph and Kansas, but shortened the Chicago–Denver route with a line between South Omaha and Lincoln through an agreement to the UP, and eventually through the construction of a cutoff between Lincoln and Jansen/Fairbury.
- Reason for the railroads entry into Nebraska, and summary of Nebraska operations (granger, bridge traffic, other):
  - Rock Island met the Union Pacific at Council Bluffs–Omaha and forwarded freight trains east to Chicago and northeast to Minneapolis–St. Paul.

- The CRI&P operated granger branches across its other states and served rural communities along its lines in Nebraska.
- The CRI&P primarily passed through Nebraska on its way to Colorado, and operated signature passenger service from Chicago by way of Fairbury to Denver and Colorado Springs on its *Rocky Mountain Rocket* and *Corn Belt Rocket* streamliners between Omaha and Chicago via Des Moines. Service to Colorado through southeast Nebraska competed directly with the Burlington in Lincoln.
- No town development affiliate is known for the CRI&P in Nebraska:
  - The Rock Island operated 250.46 miles in Nebraska (the smallest amount operated by the major railroads) and served approximately 20 incorporated communities including Lincoln, Fairbury, and Beatrice.
- Abandonments, mergers:
  - The CRI&P merged with the M&M in 1866.
  - The UP applied to acquire the Rock Island in 1960. The ICC approved the merger in 1974, but UP terminated the application.
  - The CRI&P ended its office and shops presence in Fairbury, the railroad's center of Nebraska operations in 1965, when the Nebraska and Des Moines divisions of the CRI&P were consolidated in 1965.
  - The Rock Island filed for bankruptcy in March 1975 after a labor strike shut down the company.

● Nelson	– Ruskin	12 miles abandoned	June 1939
● Beatrice	– KS state line (Bern)	54	1967
● Ruskin	– Fairbury	40	1977
● Jansen	– Beatrice	20	October 1979
● CRI&P Jct. (Omaha)	– Hallam	74	1984
  - The Rock Island ceased operations in 1980 after courts ordered the railroad's assets sold. The UP acquired parts of the railroad, including in Nebraska part of the Lincoln–Fairbury segment.
- Best historical sources on this railroad's operations, and location of corporate records:
  - General Background:
    - <http://www.american-rails.com/chicago-rock-island-and-pacific.html>
    - <http://www.rits.org/www/histories/RIHistory.html>
  - Books:
    - Bartels, Michael M., & James J. Reisdorff (2002a). *Ghost Railroads of Nebraska- A Pictorial*. South Platte Press. ISBN 0934904480, 9780934904483.

- William Edward Hayes, *Iron Road to Empire. The History of 100 Years of the Progress and Achievements of the Rock Island Lines* (New York: Simmons-Boardman, 1953).
- Other resources:
  - <http://shs.umsystem.edu/manuscripts/descriptions/desc-rail.html#C> – State Historic Society of Missouri – archives – brochures
  - <http://www.multimodalways.org/archives/rrs/CRI&P/CRI&P%20Track%20Charts/CRI&P%20Track%20Charts.html> – Track Charts
- Kansas Historical Society
  - <http://www.kshs.org/p/chicago-rock-island-and-pacific-railway-company-records-held-by-legal-counsel-in-topeka-kansas-1879/13753>
  - 6425 SW 6th Avenue, Topeka, Kansas 66615-1099, 785-272-8681, kshs.org
  - “Records documenting contractual and other relationships with subsidiary and other railroads in the region, probably entrusted to attorneys in Topeka, Kan., handling company affairs. Included are articles of agreement & consolidation; resolutions; certificates; and charters, mortgages, deeds & leases. Files are primarily from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Co. and its affiliate, The Chicago Kansas & Nebraska Railway Co., 1880-1927; other railroads include the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad; Chicago, Rock Island & Gulf Railway; Chicago, Rock Island & Mexico Railway; The Chicago, Caldwell & Southern Railway; The Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad; Kansas City & Topeka Railway; and The St. Joseph & Iowa Railroad.”
- Chicago History Museum
  - <http://chicagocollectionsconsortium.org/node/574>
  - Chicago History Museum Research Center, 1601 North Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois 60614
  - “Correspondence, affidavits, and other legal papers of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company, from the offices of Thomas F. Withrow, general solicitor 1873-1888; Thomas S. Wright, assistant solicitor 1873-1888 and general attorney 1889-1895; and Robert Mather, assistant general attorney 1894-1895 and general attorney 1895-1901. Litigation involved claims of personal injury, property loss, etc. by the general public and by employees, all resolved in the District Courts of Iowa, under which laws the company was organized and conducted business. The company was known as the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company from 1866 to 1880.”
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link:
  - Rock Island Technical Society; <http://www.rits.org/RITS/history.html>



## Missouri Pacific / MP, MoPac, MoP

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Missouri Pacific Railroad
  - Slogans: “Route of the Eagles” and “First Railroad in the West”
- Current name (2014) if different because of merger:
  - The UP merged the MP into its system in 1982. The MP name continued to be used on some equipment until MP was officially absorbed in 1997.



**The Missouri Pacific Railroad, and affiliate Texas & Pacific, prior to 1982.**

Source: <http://www.american-rails.com/missouri-pacific.html>

- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - The company was founded as the Pacific Railroad chartered in 1849 by the State of Missouri to connect St. Louis with the Missouri River. The Pacific Railroad was the first railway build west of the Mississippi and reached Kansas City in 1865. In 1872

the railroad was reorganized as the Missouri Pacific with its headquarters in St. Louis. Majority ownership was achieved by Jay Gould in 1879.

- Names, dates, and general location/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - The railroad's lines were located in the Lower Platte, Nemaha, Lower Big Blue, and Little Blue drainages in southern and southeastern Nebraska.
  - 1882–1886 – The railway entered Nebraska from three locations at Falls City, Armour, and Superior. The line achieved a connection to Omaha in 1882 via Union Pacific trackage rights.
  - A separate branch to Lincoln was established in 1886.
  - 1911 – Falls City became the major operating point for the MP with a division headquarters and roundhouse. The town supported a peak number of 700 employees in 1924.
- Reason for the railroads entry into Nebraska, and summary of Nebraska operations (granger, bridge traffic, other):
  - The MP entered Nebraska to establish granger lines, carry bridge traffic from UP's Transcontinental southeast to St. Louis, and compete for business in Omaha and at the Nebraska state capital.
  - MP operated the Omaha Belt Line Railroad on the city's west side and shared the "Omaha Road's" passenger depot on Webster Street.
  - The MP operated signature passenger service with its Missouri River Eagle streamliners that operated between St. Louis, Kansas City, and Omaha between 1940 and 1965.
  - No townsite development affiliate is known for the MP in Nebraska.
- Maximum route miles operated in Nebraska:
  - The MP operated 380.03 miles of railway in Nebraska.
  - MoPac served approximately 20 incorporated communities including Omaha, Falls City, Lincoln, Superior, Hastings, and Prosser.
- Mergers and abandonments.
  - A segment of the MP that extended from the Kansas border to Virginia, Nebraska, was acquired by Jay Gould and renamed the Kansas City Northwestern. The route was operated by the MP until it was turned over to bondholders and a receiver during 1917 bankruptcy reorganization.

- After the 1917 bankruptcy, the company was merged with several other railroads and retained the name Missouri Pacific Railroad. Bankruptcy again struck during the great depression from which the company did not recover until the 1950s.
- The MP merged with the Union Pacific in stages between 1982 and 1997.
- Branch services to Lincoln and Hastings ended in 1985.
- Dieselization after World War II required consolidation that drastically reduced the number of roundhouse employees at Falls City. The last small freight crew left the town in 1992 when the route was converted to unit-train mainline service.
- Best historical sources on this railroad's operations:
  - General Background:
    - <http://www.american-rails.com/missouri-pacific.html>
  - Books:
    - Bartels, Michael M., & James J. Reisdorff (2002a). *Ghost Railroads of Nebraska- A Pictorial*. South Platte Press. ISBN 0934904480, 9780934904483
  - Other Resources:
    - [http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/mp\\_hist.html](http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/mp_hist.html) - Merger List
    - [http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/mpry\\_hist.html](http://laurent.aublette.free.fr/histo/mpry_hist.html) - Merger List
    - <http://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000923>
    - Company archives are at the State Historical Society of Missouri:  
<http://shs.umsystem.edu/manuscripts/descriptions/desc-rail.html#M> –
    - <http://www.kansasmemory.org/locate.php?query=%22missouri+pacific+railroad%22>
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Missouri Pacific Historical Society
    - <http://www.mopac.org/>
    - Museum of Transportation, 3015 Barrett Station Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63122
    - “The Missouri Pacific Historical Society, Inc. was organized in 1980 for the purpose of obtaining, preserving and sharing information and material relating to the Missouri Pacific Railroad and its subsidiaries to the society's members and others. The current MPHS is an outgrowth of a prior group which ran from 1974 to 1977.”

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## **“CLASS I” RAILROAD WITH MINOR ROUTE-MILES IN NEBRASKA**

### **Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe / AT&SF, Santa Fe**

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway
- Current name (2014) if different because of merger:
  - Merged with Burlington Northern Railroad in 1996.
  - Name changed to Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway.
  - Name changed to BNSF Railway in 2005.
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - Founded in 1868 with its headquarters in Topeka, Kansas.
- Names, dates, and general location/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - The AT&SF operated a branchline from Strong City, Kansas, 1.2 miles into Nebraska at Superior.
- Reason for the railroad's entry into Nebraska, and summary of Nebraska operations (granger, bridge traffic, other):
  - Granger service across northern Kansas to Superior.
  - Bridge-traffic connections in the past to C&NW and CB&Q at Superior.
  - No townsite development affiliate is known for the AT&SF in Nebraska.
- Route miles and summary of operations today (2014):
  - Connects with former CB&Q, now also BNSF, at Superior, north to Hastings and west to Alma.
- Best historical sources on this railroad's operations:
  - Kansas Historical Society
  - Temple (Texas) Railroad Museum
  - San Bernardino (California) Railroad Museum
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Santa Fe Railway Historical and Modeling Society
    - <http://www.atsfrr.com/>
  - Texas Archival Resources Online
  - <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/ttusw/00038/tsw-00038.html>
  - Baker Library, Harvard Business School

- Period: 1879–1896
- Baker Library, Bloomberg Center, Harvard Business School, 25 Harvard Way, Boston, Massachusetts 02163
- “This collection consists of fourteen volumes of annual reports, notebooks and accounting information which detail the financial transactions made during the years 1879-1889. Three of the notebooks are indexed in alphabetical order. Annual reports are bound in leather with gold imprint on the cover and include handwritten notations presumably made by J. Torr Harmer, Assistant General Auditor for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad during these years.”
- Box list at: [http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/sfa/atchison,\\_topeka.htm](http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/sfa/atchison,_topeka.htm)
- Kansas Historical Society
  - Period: 1859–1995
  - 6425 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Topeka, Kansas 66615-1099
  - Some records online at: <http://www.kshs.org/p/railroad-research/15983>
  - “Kansas Memory, the Society's digital portal, contains over 3600 items from the railroad records described below. Over 2500 of those items relate to the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway/Railroad.”

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## **“CLASS I” RAILROADS WITH ONLY OMAHA-BRIDGE SERVICE IN NEBRASKA**

### **Chicago Great Western / CGW**

- Full Name of railroad in 1968:
  - Chicago Great Western Railroad after 1909.
- Name if different because of merger:
  - Chicago & North Western Railroad after merger in 1968.
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - Several companies merged in 1892 to become CGW Railway, headquartered in Chicago.
- Names, dates, and general locations/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1968:
  - CGW operated a maximum of 1,495 miles between Chicago, Minneapolis, Kansas City, and Omaha.
- Reason for the railroad’s entry into Omaha, and summary of operations:
  - In 1901, CGW leased Iowa’s Mason City & Fort Dodge Rail Road, which provided access across Iowa to the Missouri River and Omaha. CGW finished its Council Bluffs



line in 1903, and established communities along the route through the Iowa Townsite Company (Grant 2003).

- Best historical sources on this railroads operations:
  - H. Roger Grant (2003), “Iowa's Last Urban Frontier: The Chicago Great Western Railroad and the Iowa Townsite Company.” *Journal of the West*. Fall 2003. Volume 42, Issue 4. Page 17.
  - H. Roger Grant (1984), *The Corn Belt Route – A history of the Chicago Great Western Railroad Company*. Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, IL.
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Conducted through the Chicago & North Western Historical Society:  
[http://www.cnwhs.org/ch\\_cgw.htm](http://www.cnwhs.org/ch_cgw.htm)

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**Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific / CMStP&P, Milwaukee Road**

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad.
- Current name (2014) if different because of merger:
  - The CMStP&P was purchased by the Soo Line Railroad in 1985, which was acquired by Canadian Pacific in 1990.
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad was originally chartered as the Milwaukee & Waukesha Railroad in 1847. The CM&StP underwent several name changes and in 1925 it entered receivership and emerged in 1927 as the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad.
  - The headquarters of the CMStP&P was in Chicago, Illinois.
- Reason for the railroad's entry into Nebraska, and summary of operations (trains, carloads, passenger statistics):
  - The Milwaukee Road intended to carry bridge traffic of freight and passengers from Omaha to Chicago and Minneapolis–St. Paul. From 1955 Milwaukee Road continued Union Pacific's streamliners between Omaha and Chicago.
  - The Milwaukee Road's line from Manilla, Iowa, northwest through Sioux City into South Dakota also tapped Nebraska rail traffic through connections at the C&NW's South Sioux City bridge across the Missouri River.
- Best historical sources on this railroads operations:
  - General Background:

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago,\\_Milwaukee,\\_St.\\_Paul\\_and\\_Pacific\\_Railroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago,_Milwaukee,_St._Paul_and_Pacific_Railroad)
- <http://www.oldmilwaukeeroad.com/historical.htm>
- Other Resources:
  - [http://www.oldmilwaukeeroad.com/content/brief/photopages/photo08\\_09LargeMap.htm](http://www.oldmilwaukeeroad.com/content/brief/photopages/photo08_09LargeMap.htm)
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Milwaukee Road historical Association
    - <http://www.mrha.com/>
    - “The Milwaukee Road Historical Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation founded in 1972 and chartered with the State of Wisconsin to study and preserve the history of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (The Milwaukee Road) from its inception in 1850 to its acquisition by the Soo Line Railroad in 1985. MRHA is not affiliated with any railroad company. It is recognized as the official historical body dealing with The Milwaukee Road, its predecessors and its subsidiaries.”
  - Milwaukee Public Library Digital collections
    - <http://content.mpl.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/MilwRoad>
    - “Access to the Milwaukee Road Archives materials described in this online collection may be arranged by contacting the Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room at (414) 286-3061”
    - 814 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233
    - Milwaukee Public Library was designated as the official archives of the company in 1981.



## **Illinois Central / IC**

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Illinois Central
- Current name (2014) if different because of merger, etc.:
  - The IC was acquired by the Canadian National Railway in 1998.
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - Chartered in by the Illinois General Assembly in 1851.
  - Headquartered from beginning to end in Chicago.

- Names, dates, and general locations/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - The IC gained rights in 1899 to use the East Omaha Bridge built in 1893 by the Omaha Bridge & Terminal Railway Company, a subsidiary of the East Omaha Land Company. It gained a controlling interest in the bridge in 1902. The railroad did not operate in Nebraska beyond Omaha.
- Reason for the railroad's entry into Omaha, and summary of operations (trains, carloads, passenger statistics):
  - The railroad operated bridge service between Omaha and Chicago.
  - IC also served local industries in Council Bluffs and north Omaha.
- Best historical sources on this railroad's operations:
  - General Background:
    - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illinois\\_Central\\_Railroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illinois_Central_Railroad)
    - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illinois\\_Central\\_Missouri\\_River\\_Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illinois_Central_Missouri_River_Bridge)
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - The Newberry Library, Roger and Julie Baskes Department of Special Collections
    - Illinois Central Railroad company Archives
    - 1831-1984, Bulk 1851-1970
    - 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610-7324
    - “The bulk of the collection (ca. 1851-1906) was placed at the Newberry Library on deposit by the Illinois Central Railroad Company in July, 1943. Additions were made to the collection around 1990 and 1997 (specifically Papers Accompanying Board Minutes, papers relating to the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio RR and its subsidiary companies, and other miscellaneous material). The whole of the collection was formally gifted to the Newberry Library on March 20, 1995.”



## **Wabash**

- Full name of railroad in 1980:
  - Wabash Railroad after 1889.
  - Became Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Railroad under Jay Gould in 1879.
  - Controlled by the Pennsylvania Railroad after 1928.
  - Controlled by the Norfolk & Western Railway in 1964.

- Current name (2014) if different because of merger, etc.:
  - Merged into Norfolk Southern Railroad in 1991.
- Foundation date and headquarters of full name:
  - First component formed in 1837.
  - St. Louis, Missouri.
- Names, dates, and general locations/mileage of component lines merged into full name prior to 1980:
  - Wabash operated a maximum of 3,549 miles connecting the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Buffalo, Detroit, Toledo, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Omaha.
- Reason for the railroad's entry into Omaha, and summary of operations (trains, carloads, passenger statistics):
  - Bridge traffic from the Great Lakes for interchange with the Union Pacific.
  - *St. Louis Limited/Omaha Limited* signature passenger train service into Omaha and west to Cheyenne in cooperation with UP.
- Best historical sources on this railroad's operations:
  - H. Roger Grant (2004). *"Follow the Flag": A History of the Wabash Railroad Company*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Current (2014) affinity historic society and web link, and location of corporate records:
  - Wabash Railroad Historical Society
    - <http://www.wabashrhs.org/>
    - "The Wabash Railroad Historical Society is a not-for-profit, IRS tax-exempt organization dedicated to the collection and preservation of historical artifacts, data, photos and drawings on the history, operation and equipment of the Wabash Railroad Company, its predecessors and affiliates..."



## **OPERATING (IN 2014) SHORTLINES INCLUDING FORMER INTERURBANS**

### **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad.
  - Also known as the Nebraska Railroad Museum.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - Based in Fremont.

- Formed in 1989 to operate vintage equipment on a 16.5-mile segment of the former C&NW/Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad, to Hooker.
- In 2014, the museum appears to be dormant: <http://www.fremontrailroad.com/>



### **Frontier Cooperative Company**

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - Frontier Cooperative Company.
  - Established in 1915 in Brainard to provide granger switching service.
- Current operations:
  - Currently operates under same name and continues to offer granger service connecting with the Nebraska Central on part of one of UP's former Omaha & Republican Valley Railroad branchlines.
- Information on railroad:
  - <http://www.frontiercooperative.com/history>



### **Nebkota Railway**

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - Nebkota Railway Inc.
  - Formed in 1994 to operate a 100-mile segment of the former Chicago & North Western "Cowboy Line" between Crawford and Merriman.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - Currently operates 31 miles of track in northwestern Nebraska.
  - Operates as a granger railroad.
  - Continues service on former C&NW (Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley) Railroad between connection with BNSF at Chadron to 4 miles east of Crawford (Lewis 1996:213).
- Information on railroad:
  - Lewis, Edward A., *American Shortline Railway Guide* (1996), Kalmbach Publishing Co., Waukesha, WI.
  - <http://www.bnsf.com/customers/where-can-i-ship/shortlines/directory/NRI.html>



## Nebraska Central Railroad

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - Nebraska Central Railroad Company.
  - Formed in 1993 to operate former Union Pacific branchlines.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - Currently operates 266 miles of track in central Nebraska.
  - Still operates as a granger railroad.
  - Continues service on former Union Pacific (Omaha & Republican Valley) branches between Columbus through Oconee to Norfolk; Oconee through Genoa to Albion; Genoa to Spaulding; Grand Island to Ord; and Central City to Brainard (Lewis 1996:214).
- Information on railroad:
  - Lewis, Edward A., *American Shortline Railway Guide* (1996), Kalmbach Publishing Co., Waukesha, WI.
  - <http://www.rgpc.com/nebraska-central-railroad/>
  - <https://www.uprr.com/customers/shortline/lines/ncrc.shtml>



## Nebraska Northeastern Railway

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - The Nebraska Northeastern Railway (NENE) was established in 1996 to operate the former Burlington (“Pacific Short Line”) branch: Ferry Station/South Sioux City, Nebraska 123 miles west to O’Neill, Nebraska.
  - Burlington successor BNSF Railway re-acquired the line in 2012 as a granger branchline servicing ethanol-producing facilities in Jackson, Atkinson, and Plainview.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - NENE currently operates 120 miles of track in northeastern Nebraska.
  - Still operates as a granger railroad, updated to the corn-ethanol fuel era.
  - The railway functions with BNSF trackage-rights into and in Sioux City, Iowa.
- Information on railroad:
  - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska\\_Northeastern\\_Railway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska_Northeastern_Railway)
  - <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/10/18/2012-25650/bnsf-railway-company-acquisition-and-operation-exemption-nebraska-northeastern-railway-company>



### Nebraska, Kansas & Colorado Railroad

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - The company operates as the Nebraska Kansas Colorado Railway (NKCR) by OmniTRAX Inc., along former Burlington branchlines: Holdrege through Grant to Sterling, CO; McCook to Imperial; Franklin west through Red Willow County.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - Currently operates 282 miles of track in southwestern Nebraska.
  - Still operates as a granger railroad.
  - The railway functions with a BNSF trackage-rights agreement.
- Information on railroad:
  - Bartels, Michael M., & James J. Reisdorff (2002). *Historic Railroads of Nebraska*. Arcadia Publishing Company, Chicago.
  - <http://www.omnitrax.com/railroads/nebraska-kansas-colorado-railway-llc.aspx>
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska\\_Kansas\\_Colorado\\_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska_Kansas_Colorado_Railway)

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### Omaha, Beatrice & Lincoln Railway

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - Omaha, Beatrice & Lincoln Railway (OLB); also known as “The Big Red Line.”
  - Currently operated under the original name and owned by NEBCO Inc.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - Established in 1903 to run between the three namesake cities but built no more than 2.5 miles in Lincoln.
  - The line provided interurban passenger service within Lincoln.
  - Currently operating as a Class III switching railroad for the UP and BNSF.
- Information on railroad:
  - Hilton, George W., and John Fitzgerald Due (2000) *The Electric Interurban Railways in America*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California. ISBN 0804740143, 9780804740142
  - <http://www.olbrailway.com/history.html>
  - <http://www.american-rails.com/interurbans.html>

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### **Sidney & Lowe Railroad**

- Full name of railroad in 2014:
  - Sidney & Lowe Railroad, Inc.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - S&L is an 11-mile switching railroad in Sidney, connecting with BNSF at Huntsman, and UP at Brownson, operating part of the tracks originally serving the 1940s–1970s Sioux Army Depot.
- Information on railroad:
  - <https://www.uprr.com/customers/shortline/lines/sidney.shtml>

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### **Union Stock Yards Company of Omaha / South Omaha Terminal Railway / Brandon Railroad 1978–Present**

- Full name of railroad in 1978:
  - South Omaha Terminal Railway.
- Current name (2014):
  - The Brandon Corporation since 1978.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - The 17-mile line served the Union Stockyards in Omaha from 1897. It became South Omaha Terminal Railway in 1927.
  - The railway connected to the Union Pacific in downtown Omaha.
- Current operations:
  - Service is currently operated by the Brandon Corporation with BNSF trackage rights.
- Information on railroad:
  - <http://www.uprr.com/customers/shortline/lines/bran.shtml>
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brandon\\_Corporation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brandon_Corporation)
  - <http://donsdepot.donrossgroup.net/dr090.htm>

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## **ABANDONED SHORTLINES INCLUDING FORMER INTERURBANS**

### **Lincoln Traction Company**

- Full name of railroad in 1946.
  - Lincoln Traction Company.
  - Abandoned in 1946 and replaced by buses under the same company name.
- Summary of Nebraska operations.
  - Operated 37 miles of track between 1897 and 1946 in and around the City of Lincoln.
  - Provided trolley service around Lincoln, Nebraska, connecting to Nebraska Traction & Power's interurban line to Omaha.
- Information on railroad:
  - *Street and Electric Railways* (1905). U.S. Government printing office.
  - <http://www.american-rails.com/interurbans.html>

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### **Nebraska Traction & Power Company**

- Full name of railroad in 1926.
  - Nebraska Traction & Power Company. Later became part of the Omaha & Lincoln Railway & Light Company.
  - Ended rail operation in 1926.
- Summary of Nebraska operations.
  - The interurban line operated about 50 miles between 1909 and 1926 in Omaha, and South Omaha, then southwest to Ralston, Papillion, Havelock, University Place, Normal, College View, and Lancaster, probably connecting on Lincoln's outskirts with the Lincoln Traction streetcar system.
- Information on railroad:
  - Frederic Nicholas (Editor) (1913). *McGraw Electric Railway Manual: The Red Book of American Street Railway Investment*. McGraw Publishing Company, New York.
  - Hilton, George W., and John Fitzgerald Due (2000). *The Electric Interurban Railways in America*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California. ISBN 0804740143, 9780804740142
  - <http://www.american-rails.com/interurbans.html>

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### **Omaha & Southern Interurban Railway Company**

- Full name of railroad in 1931:
  - Omaha and Southern Interurban Railway Company (O&SI).
  - Ceased operation in 1931 and reconstituted as Bellevue & Fort Crook Bus Lines.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - The line operated between 1906 and 1931 in and around Omaha.
  - The OS&I provided interurban services between Omaha and its suburbs, and an 8-mile line south to Fort Crook.
- Information on railroad:
  - Justman, Ben (2011) *Images of America: Bellvue*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston South Carolina. ISBN978-0-7385-7651-0
  - Hilton, George W., and John Fitzgerald Due (2000) *The Electric Interurban Railways in America*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California. ISBN 0804740143, 9780804740142
  - <http://www.american-rails.com/interurbans.htm>



### **Omaha Belt Line Railroad**

- Full name of railroad c. 1980:
  - Omaha Belt Railway.
  - Also known simply as Omaha Belt Line.
- Summary of Nebraska operations:
  - The Omaha Belt operated 15 miles of lines in west, south, and downtown Omaha.
  - Built by Union Pacific in 1885–1886 while under control of Jay Gould, the Omaha Belt soon fell under Gould’s Missouri Pacific operation, which offered Gould direct access to Omaha business and connections with other lines.
  - Mostly abandoned following UP’s modern merger with MP in 1980, some track segments survive to serve industries in South Omaha, and right of way with the MoPac Trail hiking corridor segment in South Omaha.
- Information on railroad:
  - Kratville, William (2002). *Railroads of Omaha and Council Bluffs (Images of Rail)*. Arcadia Publishing. Charleston, SC, et al.



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